MAY 9, 2005

IN THESE TIMES

MEXICAN STANDOFF: THE OUSTING OF OBRADOR



the emerging PROGRESSIVE MEDIA NETWORK

is low-cost WI-FI UN-AMERICAN?

5 ways to COMBAT CONSERVATIVE MEDIA

making CONNECTIONS

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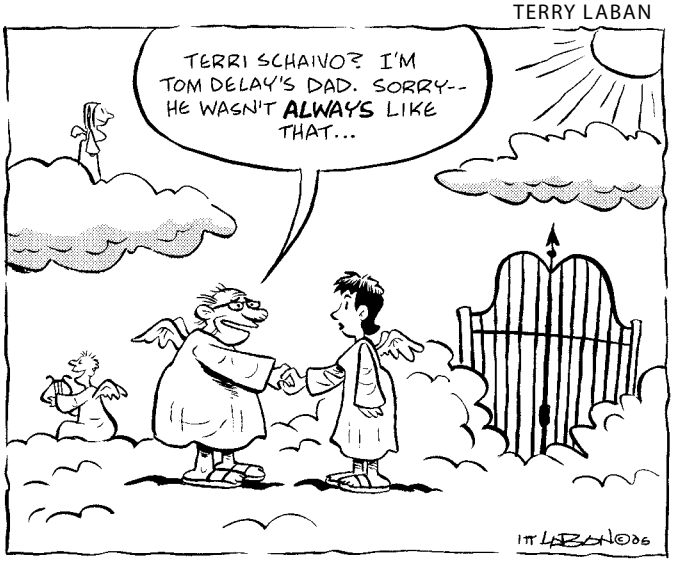
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"When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my gun."

Joseph Goebbels

TERRY LABAN



Editorial

The Vultures of Life

By Brian Cook

It's apparently not enough for George W. Bush to have taken the words "freedom," "liberty," and "democracy," and perverted their meanings beyond any recognizable definition. His latest lexical transformation targets nothing less than "life" itself.

The president has been on the stump touting the "culture of life" and we can cheerily look forward to being saturated by the term for the indefinite future. The death of Pope John Paul II provided Bush both an occasion to hail the phrase's progenitor and a political opportunity to "stay on message."

What is that message? According to Bush, it is a culture "in which the strong protect the weak." It's tempting to suggest that "protect" here means something akin to "feast on the vanquished flesh of." But perhaps it's wiser to take Bush's meaning at face value, and note that his usage precludes the possibility of empowering the weak. The unspoken assumption is that the strong must continue to be strong and, more significant, that the weak must continue to be kept weak.

The administration's proposed budget spelled the logic out clearly. Strengthen the strong—tax cuts for the rich and budget increases for their military "protectors." Weaken the weak—budget cuts to education, housing subsidies and other social services.

It should be no surprise then that a "culture of the-opposite-of-life" surrounds us. For example, take a look at our schools. March brought *another* school shooting, this time on an Indian reservation where 39 percent of the population live below the poverty line. That the tragedy was widely reported, and duly catalogued, as "the worst school shooting since Columbine," speaks volumes about how adept we've become in normalizing such violent outbursts.

As for our military protectors, on March 25, the ACLU released 1,200 pages of documents obtained from the Pentagon revealing the widespread use of torture in Iraq. Disobeying a court order, the Bush administration delayed the documents' release until late on a Friday night—the better to bury the sordid story in the Saturday news hole. The documents included such life-affirming revelations as the breaking of a teenage detainee's jaw and superior officers ordering soldiers to "beat the fuck out of" prisoners.

But, surely our statesmen spouting the "culture of life" must be exemplars of that value? Men like Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), who recently pondered the "connection" between the recent "spate of courthouse violence" and "unaccountable" judges "making political decisions." Granted, Cornyn didn't know for certain "if there is a cause-and-effect connection." He was just positing the notion, tentatively, in a spirit of free and nitwitted inquiry.

Such examples, however, are somewhat disingenuous. Proponents of a "culture of life" have one main concern (aside from homosexuals) in both culture and life: babies. Not the ones that are actually born, mind you. Advocates of "life" say nothing about the fact that the United States now ranks 42nd in the world in infant mortality, two spots below Cuba.

The reason for their silence is simple. To change the U.S. infant mortality rate would require granting the right to universal healthcare to the already born who actually can (and rightfully do) assert that right. It's no coincidence that the only subjects to whom the Republicans willingly grant rights are those whose voices they can ventriloquize—fetuses and the unfortunate Terri Schiavo.

In both cases, the concerned parties—respectively, pregnant women and Michael Schiavo—who actually can claim rights, such as the right not to have their bodies legislated or the right of the spouse as next-of-kin to honor a loved one's wishes, are dismissed by Republicans.

Thus, in the name of protecting the helpless, Republican policies seek to make nearly everyone helpless. Those of us who still have a voice must strongly protest: When we're told they're giving us liberty, what they're really giving us is death. ■

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Letters



Saddam Was No Abstraction

I was enjoying Jamie Daniels' review "Adorno as Antidote" (March 28) until I came across the following line: "a market-friendly abstraction called 'Iraqi freedom.'"

Does Daniels really think this is an abstraction? That it's somehow another false consciousness pushed onto us by capitalism? Only someone who is completely secure and safe—i.e., someone who has zero experience in dangerous, complicated situations like Iraq—could imagine that what has happened there is an abstraction. Only fools try to paint Iraq as some sort of beautiful flower right now. But there is nothing abstract about the changes that have, thankfully, come over that part of the world.

George Firebrand
Minneapolis, Minn.

The Excellent Reputation of Our Company

In her article "Trafficking in Politics" (March 16), Eartha Melzer refers to employees of DynCorp International who were allegedly buying women and girls to keep as sex slaves.

For the record, the incidents she cites, which involve sex trafficking and prostitution in Bosnia in 1999, were a profound embarrassment for DynCorp International, which was concerned not only for the women and girls involved, but also for the excellent reputation our company has built over nearly 60 years.

DynCorp International cooperated fully and immediately with government investigators, and quickly terminated eight employees who were found to be involved in sex trafficking and the illegal sales of firearms. Senior management then traveled throughout the region to make certain that all employees understood the company's Standards of Conduct, with particular reference to trafficking and prostitution, and to make clear that the company would not tolerate illegal activities by employees working for DynCorp overseas—even on their own time.

Persons who report such activities are protected from retaliation, but not from the consequences of their own involvement in proscribed activities.

DynCorp International remains in good standing because it acted responsibly and decisively when it learned of illegal activities by its employees and because it is committed to maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the company. No company with 14,500 employees working throughout the world can guarantee that it will never have to confront wrongdoing by some employees, but DynCorp International is taking all possible steps to ensure that employees know that they are expected to meet high standards of conduct and that those who engage in illegal or unethical activities will be held to account.

Gregory Lagana
Vice President, Communications
DynCorp International
Reston, Va.

Eternal Art

Thank you for the memorable reflections by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, whose *Warrior for Gringostroika* I still read ("Radical Changes," March 14). His piece, "Undiscovered Amerindians," presenting a caged "lost prehistoric" culture, is dangerously relevant today as our government cages other cultures in Guantanámo and elsewhere. Proof of a classic, eternal art.

Charles Scanlon
Deming, N.M.

Correction

Two errors appeared in Christopher Hayes' "How to Turn Your Red State Blue" (April 18). In the list of the 10 states with the highest rates of bankruptcy, Arkansas appeared twice. Georgia should have been included.

The article also conflated Brent Bozell Jr. and Brent Bozell III. Unfortunately, Bozell Jr., quoted by Rick Perlstein in his book *Before the Storm*, is dead. It is his son who is "today a prominent conservative activist."

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DISCUSSION

"If schools really want to foster the imaginative powers of children (which, after 20 years in teaching, I very often doubt), art class is the perfect place. And let's give a boost to music and drama class while we're at it. Of course, children have an inherent tendency to use their imaginations, which is the basis of real creativity, so along with all the 'academic' subjects we put kids through, I consider arts-related classes to be essential. It's not just sad that art, music, drama and all of the fine and performing arts have become increasingly rare in schools, it's almost an act of aggression against the developing minds of children. It's perfectly obvious that the place where so many students flourish isn't in history or psych class, but in their explorations with artistic media, music, acting and so forth.

"Do I wish my own kids could relate in detail the politico-economic effects of the Hawley-Smoot tariff, or am I more pleased they learned how to read music while in school (which is something I cannot do)? It's not even a question."

Join the debate online at "The Dead Hand of Disney."

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INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
2040 North Milwaukee Avenue
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PHONE (773) 772-0100
FAX (773) 772-4180
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Dear *In These Times* Reader,

In his book *The Republican Noise Machine*, David Brock writes that in the last 30 years, conservatives have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in "a deliberate, well-financed, and expressly acknowledged communications and deregulatory plan … to subvert and subsume journalism and reshape the national consciousness through the media, with the intention of skewing American politics sharply to the right. The plan has succeeded spectacularly."

In this issue's cover story "Making Connections," Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke analyze and map how conservatives developed this successful media machine and what progressives should do to create a media network that moves progressive ideas into the mainstream.

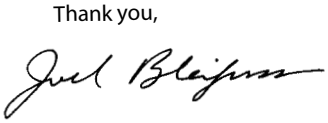
"Existing progressive alternative media," Brock writes, "need more financial support from the progressive community so that they may more effectively compete with the massively subsidized right-wing media."

As you read through this issue, please consider how your support will help *In These Times* advance the emerging progressive media network. Like all nonprofit publications, *In These Times* could not survive without contributions from its readers. Your support, above and beyond the cost of a subscription, provides almost half of our annual operating budget.

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10 Danielle Chynoweth leads the way for IndyMedia.



Lula knocked the IMF out of Brazil.

IMF on the Ropes in Brazil

Brazil's decision to cut some ties with the Fund is indicative of changing times in Latin America. *By Kenneth Rapoza*

For the first time in six years, Brazil will not renew its accord with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The accord was up for renewal March 31. However, Finance Minister Antonio Palocci, an international respected fiscal conservative, announced on March 28 that President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva's wish to end Brazil's conflict-laden relationship with the IMF would be granted.

Since December 1998, Brazil has withdrawn $93 billion from their IMF credit line. In total, the country owes $24.6 billion by 2009. On balance, the country's economy grew zero percent between 1998 and 2003, according to the Fund's February Latin America report. Essentially, all the IMF did was keep foreign investors confident that if Brazil couldn't pay its debtors, the Fund was there to bail them out.

Brazil is the IMF's biggest debtor, and therefore its most important client. Argentina is second. (By comparison, China, India and Russia have no outstanding IMF loans and therefore are not subject to the Fund's tutelage.) Brazil's economy grew 5.2 percent in 2004. Record trade surpluses have helped Brazil accumulate the cash the government needs to service its debts to foreign and domestic lenders, including the $846 million it will pay in interest to the IMF this year.

Saying "goodbye" to the Fund makes political sense for Lula, who faces re-election next year. Lula's base considers the IMF the prime policy apparatus behind economic failures in Brazil and neighboring Argentina. They're not alone in this assessment. Argentina's blowout cost Brazil billions in lost trade revenue, which ultimately translated into job losses at home. Twelve percent unemployment was the norm in 2004, with 19 percent in Sao Paulo in 2002.

Those are terrible numbers for a country finding it harder and harder to ignore the needs of the poor

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and working class. While the IMF asserts that Brazilian poverty decreased in the mid-'90s by 10 percent, according to the World Bank more than one-third of Brazilians—183 million people—live in wooden or brick shacks on less than $2 a day. Socioeconomic realities such as these have discredited the IMF throughout Latin America, where many consider the Fund the kingpin of a financier cartel oblivious to development and social needs.

Labor union leaders with close ties to Lula are heralding the finance minister's decision as if it ushers in a new era of social spending and cuts to the country's 19.25 percent interest rate. But industrial groups are more pessimistic, not because they will miss the IMF, but because they're certain the government will be even more draconian in raising interest rates to curb inflation—an old demand of the IMF—so as to show investors that they're not going to change course.

By severing the previous lending relationship, Lula can tell his supporters that Brazil can now get by without the IMF and didn't have to go broke to "cut them loose." But that's only half true. The IMF isn't going away, and it is Brazil that is inviting them back, though in a very different capacity. Under a new program that the country helped to design, Brazil will be allowed greater spending flexibility. This will allow the government to invest in infrastructure projects long ignored under IMF budget restraints.

"It's a very important achievement," says Enrique Iglesias, president of the Inter-American Development Bank. The Bank worked with the Fund and Brazil to create the pilot program. Chile once did something similar, but the Fund only allowed for public investment in oil projects that had a guaranteed investment return. The Brazilian government has chosen mostly to invest in fixing dilapidated roads, irrigation projects and chemical and biological research and development labs located in the Amazon. According to Iglesias, the IMF has no say in what Brazil chooses to invest in, only that the "the projects need to eventually be financially sound and cannot create a burden on public accounts." The three-year program allows Brazil $1 billion a year to play with. Not bad, but still significantly less than what they pay in debt service.

The IMF has changed its position in Latin America out of necessity: The IMF probably needs Latin America more than it needs the IMF. Latin American leaders are starting to recognize that they can have a voice within these institutions. As a result, the IMF responded positively to Brazil's decision, as did U.S. Treasury Secretary John T. Snow. Iglesias calls Argentina's recently approved plan to pay just 76 percent of its debt, "reasonable." With that in mind, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, Néstor Kirchner of Argentina and Lula agreed to sign an accord in Uruguay on March 2 to negotiate their foreign debt as a bloc, rather than individually.

The IMF knows changes are afoot in Latin America. Former IMF Executive Director Vijay L. Kelkar wrote in the March issue of the IMF's magazine, *Finance & Development*, "It is time for the IMF to adapt to present needs [and] ... promote globalization that would benefit all, not just one particular region or group of countries. A new debate in favor of regional monetary arrangements has emerged."

Kelkar is aware that competing capitalisms are changing the nature of the world's financial system. Argentina's foreign minister, Rafael Bielsa, put it this way in the Argentine press about his region's pressures to change the Fund: "There's a rebellion on the farm. The IMF is no longer a corral, and the little animals are beginning to escape."

And the perception in Brazil and the region as a whole is that since the privatization and foreign debt boom of the '90s, the United States has abandoned the region. Aside from immigration concerns, Washington has only to worry about competition from a more unified South America and what that could mean to the government's ultimate goal in the region—the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

When asked by Univision TV during her Mexico visit on March 9, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice said the new tendency to elect left-wing leaders in Latin America was fine so long as it was done within democratic structures. Rice's chief concern is likely to match that of leaders like Lula who know that booming stock markets and record trade surpluses might be enough to send the IMF packing, but are meaningless unless countries can provide essential services to the poor, reduce poverty and allow for the growth of a stable middle class. ■

KENNETH RAPOZA *is a former staff correspondent for* World Press Review *magazine. He now covers international finance and development policy from Brazil as a freelancer.*

IN SHORT

Profiling Students

Congress is considering a proposal from the Department of Education that would radically alter the way universities provide information to the government about their students.

Under the new individual student unit record system, colleges and universities would be required to submit detailed information on each student, including social security numbers, race, ethnicity, individual course loads, housing situations and complete financial aid information. The Department of Education argues this new system would generate more accurate statistics about graduation rates, enrollment, tuition and financial aid than the current system of aggregated statistics.

In an Op-Ed in the March 29 *Washington Post*, Katherine Haley Will, president of Gettysburg College, wrote that under the proposed system, "The potential for abuse of power and violation of civil liberties is immense." On March 21, the Department of Education released a feasibility study that admitted that issues of privacy would "need to be addressed and resolved," but proposed no solutions to such concerns. States that have adapted a similar system assign random identification numbers to protect individual privacy, but the Department of Education's proposed system offers no such provision.

The financial burden that institutions will be required to take on is also daunting, as these added costs would be reflected in increased tuition. Potential costs would include personnel changes, re-training, and information technology updates. The government could take away all federal monies allotted to any school which refuses to cooperate, "a penalty that would fall on students in need while leaving more affluent students unaffected," Haley Will noted.

Jeanne E. Herrick-Stare, a senior analyst for civil liberties at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, a public interest lobby group, is also troubled by the potential changes. In an open letter on the group's Web site, she wrote that the new requirements could "create the potential for a lifetime federal profile of individuals not involved with, or suspected of, any crime."

—Jennifer Wedekind

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APPALL-O-METER

3.4 This Bus Is Bound For Glory

On a visit to the National Religious Broadcasters' Convention, reporter Max Blumenthal was able to examine "Bus #19," the twisted hulk of a Jerusalem bus attacked by a suicide bomber. As he writes on Mediatransparency.com, this grisly artifact is sent all over the world by the JerUSAlem Connection, a fundagelical Christian Zionist group (headed by a retired U.S. general) that "looks at the conflict in Israel within a biblical context." Their aim, apparently, is to advance the policies of the Likud Party, thus advancing the onset of the prophesied End Times, which, in turn, entail a not-so-nice fate for the better part of Bus #19's typical commuters.

But anyway. Nearby, promotional brochures were passed out. "Bring Bus #19 To Your Community!" it read. "For Christians, you will increase in stature, appreciation and acceptance by Jews."

3.1 Really, Coach, It's Just A Scratch

It's not every day that a teacher gets disciplined for violating state and school board policies on body fluid exposure, but, then, Scott Reed is no ordinary educator. He is a science teacher, head football coach and dean of students at Central Linn High School in Salem, Oregon. He is also a man who heals youngsters with his mouth.

According to the Eugene (Oregon) *Register-Guard*, the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission charged Reed with gross neglect of duty after several parents complained that Reed was licking the wounds of Central Linn student athletes.



Apparently, Reed began his salivary ministrations innocently enough. In a pep talk to the school football team, he told of a coach whose devotion was so great that he licked the wounds of his players. His own squad dared Reed to do the same to the scab on a player's knee, which he did, with consent.

Problem is, he didn't stop there. Authorities have not determined how many students Reed has licked, but they reportedly include members of the girls' track team. The school district has required Reed to take a bloodborne pathogens test and has placed him on a one-year probation with "zero tolerance" for further licking.

0.9 Our Cultural Revolution

You know your little culture war imbroglio is in trouble when Maoist kids show up and seem sensible by comparison. After Randall Terry finished speaking at a rally for Terri Schiavo, reports CNN, members of the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigades took over the PA system and started hurling epithets like "Christian fascist thug" in Randall Terry's direction. "[Terri Schiavo's] brain is not functional," one member pleaded. "It's not going to recover. Let her die in peace."

—Dave Mulcahey

GM's Healthcare Double Standard

Bad ideology trumps good business. *By David Lindorff*

What a difference a border makes. General Motors executives say soaring health costs in their U.S. plants are forcing them to seek health benefits give-backs from unionized workers, yet they insist national healthcare is not an appropriate solution for America. As company spokeswoman Sherri Woodruff puts it, "GM thinks there has to be closer cooperation between the government and the private sector, but we don't advocate a single-payer system for the U.S."

Yet just across the Detroit River in Ontario, the company's subsidiary—like the subsidiaries of Ford, DaimlerChrysler and other U.S. firms—strongly endorses Canada's national health system.

"The Canadian plan has been a significant advantage for investing in Canada," says GM Canada spokesman David Patterson, noting that in the United States, GM spends $1,400 per car on health benefits. Indeed, with the provinces sharing 75 percent of the cost of Canadian healthcare, it's no surprise that GM, Ford and Chrysler have all been shifting car production across the border at such a rate that the name "Motor City" should belong to Windsor, not Detroit.

Just two years ago, GM Canada's CEO Michael Grimaldi sent a letter co-signed by Canadian Autoworkers Union president Buzz Hargrave to a Crown Commission considering reforms of Canada's 35-year-old national health program that said, "The public healthcare system significantly reduces total labour costs for automobile manufacturing firms, compared to their cost of equivalent private insurance services purchased by U.S.-based automakers." That letter also said it was "vitally important that the publicly funded healthcare system be preserved and renewed, on the existing principles of universality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration," and went on to call not just for preservation but for an "updated range of services." CEOs of the Canadian units of Ford and DaimlerChrysler wrote similar encomiums endorsing the national health system.

How can the same corporations that in Canada recognize the bottom-line logic of a national health system be so opposed to the idea here?

One answer is ideology. The notion of having the government take over an industry that represents about 15 percent of the U.S. economy gives U.S. executives the willies. But in backing insurance company interests, GM runs counter to both its own business interests and the sentiments of many customers.

Polls have long shown a majority of Americans favor some kind of national healthcare system. Now, with studies suggesting that the average cost of providing health benefits has reached $6,800 per employee, corporate executives may join the broader public in finally taking a look at the Canadian model. "Is there a private sector solution to the rapidly

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Canadian health-care in action.

JOHN NORMILE / GETTY IMAGES

increasing cost of healthcare? Probably not," says Deloitte Consulting's Jon Erb. "There would be huge resistance to a wholesale national solution because the tentacles of the healthcare industry reach into all sectors of the economy, but I suspect you'll see business' strategy will be to sneak a single-payer system in a little bit at a time."

Back in 1970, a year before Canada switched from an employer-based, insurance company-administered health system like that in the United States to a national single-payer model, both countries were devoting about 7 percent of GDP to healthcare. Today, Canada devotes 9.1 percent of GDP to healthcare, while the United States devotes a whopping 15.1. Meanwhile, Canada boasts better health statistics and all of its citizens are fully covered, even for catastrophic illnesses like cancer or AIDS. In the United States, some 15 percent of people have no insurance coverage at all and medical costs are the leading cause of bankruptcy.

U.S. conservatives routinely attack the Canadian system for its reputed long waits and for driving many Canadians across the border for treatment. In fact, however, Canadians love their healthcare system, and keep electing candidates who back it. Moreover, Canadians say U.S. criticisms are gross exaggerations. A study by Steven Katz et al. in *Health Affairs* found that in fact the only real Canadians using U.S. healthcare were "snowbirds" and resident aliens.

According to GM Canada spokesman Stew Low, the charge that Canadians endure terrible delays in getting treatment is also overblown. "It comes from people with an axe to grind," he says. "In general, people here have ready access to healthcare."

Meanwhile, in the United States, health insurance coverage is worsening. The *New York Times* reported recently that the percentage of companies paying 100 percent of employee insurance premiums had "plummeted" over the last four years, from 29 percent to only 17 percent. Worse yet, many employers are simply dropping health benefits. Before long, healthcare benefits in the United States will be the exception, not the rule.

Maybe Congress should invite GM Canada's Grimaldi down to talk about how Canada deals with the problem. ■

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THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF the Urbana/Champaign IndyMedia Center (UC IMC) read like a media activist's wish list:

- Start free monthly paper partially funded by local labor groups.
- Produce news segments for community radio station and work to get license from FCC to start new station.
- Open up storefront shop in downtown and attract kids with all-ages performance venue.
- Piss off mayor by insisting that the local cable access channel run "Democracy Now!"

Media for the People

By Aaron Sarver



Danielle Chynoweth

The volunteers who run UC IMC have done all this and are now looking for new ways to alter the media landscape in their Illinois town. What began in late 2000 as 10 people meeting weekly has grown to an organization with more than 300 volunteers.

The UC IMC is part of a large and evolving media reform movement. After the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, IMCs popped up in cities around the world. Activists, who had long complained about media coverage of protests, decided the time had come to take reporting into their own hands. Today more than 80 IMCs have been established in more than 30 countries. But the UC IMC is one of the most effective—and the first to gain 501(c)(3), or nonprofit, status. While IMCs in larger cities have struggled to reach out beyond a core of media activists, the UC IMC has engaged its community by effectively talking about issues that affect people locally.

"The success of the IMC movement depends on everyday people realizing that, in our monoculture of information, their eyes and ears are valuable," says Danielle Chynoweth, co-founder of the UC IMC. She believes that by providing an alternative media outlet the group is changing the media dynamic in Urbana/Champaign.

"We can look at examples when the IMC's reporting changed the reporting of the mainstream press," says Chynoweth. "Frequently it's the case that we'll break a story and then the mainstream press will cover it. Ultimately, what we want to see is under-covered stories covered."

In 2003, Chynoweth spoke at the first annual National Conference for Media Reform about organizing local activist groups around the issue of media reform. Her talk, which she billed as "10 rules for organizing a space in 10 minutes," addressed the biggest problem facing many activist groups: How do you get your group to *do* something instead of getting bogged down in questions of process? One of her 10 rules, adhered to by the UC IMC, is, "Empower those who work, not those who just talk."

"If you talk, you don't necessarily make decisions. You can't just show up to a meeting and mouth off about how you want this and want that," she says. "As a result, that's really kept the IMC an organization that runs by consensus, and is driven by people who do work and are willing to ask for something and put their energy and time behind making that thing happen."

The UC IMC is structured around a number of working groups that operate autonomously. For example, if a community member is interested in helping with the radio station—scheduled to launch this June—they at10d the meeting of that working group, and avoid lengthy and unrelated discussions of the monthly paper or video projects, which have their own working groups and separate meetings.

Much of the unique success of the UC IMC can also be attributed to group members like Chynoweth, who have evolved from media activists to community organizers with a foot in electoral politics. Elected to a second four-year city council term in February, Chynoweth has ambitious goals for herself and the IMC. "My life goal is to decrease power differences and to connect people to resources that help change their lives, " she says. As a member of the city council, she fought for and won a domestic partner registry, pushed affordable housing issues and, most recently, helped pass an ordinance removing tasers from the Urbana police force.

Being an active part of the community is important to Chynoweth. "I would like the IMC Foundation to be the owners of a community arts and media center in the heart of our downtown," she says. The group has raised more than over $60,000 and is currently looking for a permanent building. ■

To hear an audio interview with Chynoweth, visit fireontheprairie.com, In These Times' *monthly radio show.*

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Fear, Loathing and the GOP

The telltale sign of desperation in politics is when people start making wild threats and accusations. From Joe McCarthy to Richard Nixon, the Republican Party has a long record in this realm, regularly trying to deflect attention from its troubles by lashing out with menacing rhetoric and intimidation tactics. Today's Republican Party is no different.

Case in point is scandal-plagued House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, who shows more and more of his frightening colors every day. In a span of two weeks last month, he showed just how open the Republican Party is to the most extreme and thuggish tactics.

Take his antics in the tragic Terri Schiavo case. After injecting himself into what should have been a private family matter, DeLay saw polls that showed an overwhelming majority of Americans opposed what he was doing. Instead of backing down, he dug in. Instead of acknowledging the public's sentiment, he proclaimed there was a national "syndicate" conspiring "to destroy everything we believe in." Paranoia, anyone?

A panel of federal judges in Atlanta rejected DeLay's efforts to overturn the years of litigation surrounding the Schiavo affair. Judge Stanley F. Birch went out of his way to chastise DeLay's heavy-handed tactics. "When the fervor of political passions moves the executive and legislative branches to act in ways inimical to basic constitutional principles, it is the duty of the judiciary to intervene," wrote Judge Birch, a Bush I appointee known for his conservatism. "If sacrifices to the independence of the judiciary are permitted today, precedent is established for the constitutional transgressions of tomorrow."

Of course, that didn't make DeLay back down. He immediately threatened to have the judges in the matter impeached. Other Republicans joined in, with Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) saying Congress could abolish the court that made the ruling, cut its budget and "prohibit the Justice Department from enforcing the orders of the court."

When Schiavo died, the real bullying began. DeLay issued a statement: "The time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behavior." The threat was perfectly timed to coincide with death threats against the Florida judge, George Greer, who ruled in the case, and it no doubt gave aid and comfort to those who are plotting physical violence. And make no mistake about it—they are out there. FBI officials have already arrested a North Carolina man for allegedly placing a $250,000 bounty on the head of Michael Schiavo and another $50,000 on the judge's—threats taken seriously after the murder of another federal judge's family in Chicago a few weeks ago.

This was all happening at the same time DeLay was becoming more embroiled in a spate of ethics and corruption charges surrounding the influence of corporate money on Texas' recent congressional redistricting. Unwilling to admit any wrongdoing in the case, and not satisfied with threatening only judges, DeLay has responded by intimidating members of his own party who are raising questions. Specifically, he has deployed fellow conservative leaders to say that defending DeLay is a litmus test for any Republican lawmaker seeking support. According to the *Washington Times*, "Republicans are being told support for Mr. DeLay is mandatory if they want future support from conservatives."

This might not be so frightening if it was limited to one man. But it is not. In recent years, the conservative movement has shown a willingness to use this kind of posture to fire up the conservative base and pursue its agenda. Recall former Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) essentially threatening the president of the United States in 1994 when he said, "Mr. Clinton better watch out if he comes down here. He'd better have a bodyguard."

The Associated Press soon reported on just how commonplace that kind of rhetoric had become. "A senator says the president had better not visit his state without a bodyguard," the news service wrote. "An anti-abortion leader describes shooting abortion doctors as 'justifiable homicide.' A radio talk-show host advises listeners to shoot at the head if attacked by federal agents wearing bulletproof vests." It's all part of the conservative movement's belief that openly bullying its political opposition is acceptable.

The good news is that Joe McCarthy and Richard Nixon both were forced from office in shame—a well-deserved punishment for this kind of un-American behavior. The bad news is that the worst came just before they left office, and thus, the worst is probably yet to come from today's Republicans. The White House is already beginning to forcibly remove suspected Democrats from the President's public events. And a new book titled *The Vast Left Wing Conspiracy* menacingly lists names of key progressives on its book jacket, as if they are on some enemies list requiring retribution.

When it will end, no one knows. But you can rest assured it will. History proves no amount of intimidation can turn democratic America into the quasi-fascist state that conservatives desire. ■

Instead of acknowledging the public's sentiment, Tom DeLay publicly claimed there was a national "syndicate" conspiring "to destroy everything we believe in."

DAVID SIROTA *is a progressive political strategist who is currently writing a book on the middle-class economic squeeze for Crown Publishers. He was formerly the chief spokesman for Democrats on the House Appropriations Committee and, before that, the press secretary for U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.).*

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Back Talk *By Susan J. Douglas*

Fairness Now

It was the elimination of the Fairness Doctrine that created an ideological field that justifies deregulation.

As long as we are dreaming of the near impossible—the reinstitution of the concept that the airwaves are a resource that belong to us all—let's go whole hog, and imagine something else—the reinstitution of the Fairness Doctrine. Sure, this will never happen as long as the Republicans control Congress and the White House. But just as few Republicans, in the dark post-Watergate days, dared to dream that one day the voices of the far right would dominate talk radio and much of public affairs programming on television, progressives now need to dream of reversing this, and to back up that dream with a long-term battle plan.

Why does the Fairness Doctrine matter? It was, of course, the very concrete deregulation of ownership restrictions that began under Reagan's FCC Chairman Mark Fowler, and then the Telecommunications Act of 1996, that paved the way for massive consolidation. But it was the elimination of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 that created an ideological field that would, in fact, justify and celebrate this deregulation. Everywhere, there was a chorus of voices that demonized government oversight of pretty much everything, especially the broadcasting industry, and that promoted "the market" as the only way to "give the people what they want." Utterly marginalized in the post-doctrine landscape were the voices of women (except for right-wing blondes), people of color (except for anti-affirmative action folks and/or those on the payroll of the government) and not only progressives, but even liberals.

The basic principle of the Fairness Doctrine—that radio and television stations have the obligation to address all sides of public controversy during the course of their broadcasting—was implied in the Communications Act of 1934, and then formalized in 1949. In practice, the Doctrine was meant to do two things: require stations to cover controversial issues of public importance and provide differing viewpoints on such issues. It was meant to prevent stations from broadcasting a single ideological perspective, day in and day out, without opposing viewpoints.

The free marketeers in the Reagan administration argued that broadcasters had the right to broadcast what they wanted, when they wanted, free of government guidelines. In August 1987, the FCC simply announced that it would no longer enforce the Fairness Doctrine. Congress responded in September by passing a bill that would have reinstated the doctrine—it passed the House by a margin of 3 to 1 and the Senate by a margin of 2 to 1. Reagan promptly vetoed it. There has been no Fairness Doctrine since.

Now, it's not like the broadcasting of yore was filled with the diverse voices of progressives, feminists, people of color or community activists. We should not impose an artificial nostalgia on the past. But the conservative argument that most FCC regulation was ineffective in the past and thus unnecessary now does not speak to the present moment, nor is it correct.

Let's pick just one example. In 1946, the FCC, in an effort to bring more diversity to the air, reduced the required bandwidth distance between stations, thus allowing more stations to inhabit adjacent frequencies. As a result, between 1946–1951 the number of small stations between 200–1,000 watts increased by 500 percent and much of the music, public affairs and talk on these stations reflected more local, grassroots interests. Some began catering to the black audience, newly discovered as a "market." The result? By the mid-'50s, radio was the least segregated of all the mass media, giving air time to black artists and, slowly but surely, putting black DJs on the air.

Critics argue that the Fairness Doctrine was confusing to stations and citizens alike, and that it was expensive and time-consuming to enforce. Maybe so. But its demise has been a disaster. Of greatest concern to most of us is, of course, the onslaught of conservative opinion, particularly on the radio, that remains unanswered and unchallenged. Right-wing evangelical broadcasting has metastasized, vilifying their favorite demons without any fear of contradiction or response. It is hardly surprising that Rush Limbaugh opposes the Fairness Doctrine on a regular basis—where would he be without its elimination?

Public affairs and news programming have also been crippled by the death of the Doctrine. According to a study by the Benton Foundation, as reported by Steve Rendall in *Extra!*, 25 percent of broadcast stations no longer offer *any* local news or public affairs programming.

Restoration of the Fairness Doctrine is hardly a panacea. But regulation—or deregulation—and ideology have always gone hand in hand, one justifying the other. Ongoing media consolidation, and the censorship and pro-right blather that go with it, are sustained by the silencing of oppositional voices Americans are no longer required to hear. But it turns out Americans do want to hear these voices: A 2004 poll showed that 77 percent of respondents supported reinstating rules requiring fairness and balance on public airwaves. It's time, as they say in the business, to give the people what they want. ■

SUSAN J. DOUGLAS *is a professor of communications at the University of Michigan and author of* The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Has Undermined Women.

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The GOP's Quest for Color

Insistent complaints from right-wing pundits about the media's liberal bias have been effective. Now even the most extreme right-wing notions receive a hearing in the corporate mainstream media.

This tactic has been so successful that the right is now using it to gain more exposure in the black media—a venue they've long criticized as left-leaning. The strategy coincides with the GOP's aggressive attempts to gain more black votes for elections in 2006 and 2008.

The scope of this new outreach was hinted at by news that Armstrong Williams, a conservative black pundit, was paid $240,000 to promote the Bush administration's "No Child Left Behind" education scheme. Republicans have talked of seeking black votes, but seldom have they devoted resources to the effort.

Because of the right's effective pitch, African-American publications and black-oriented broadcast media now feel an obligation to showcase conservative voices. The Williams fiasco not only revealed the GOP's attempt to exploit this opportunity, but also how out of touch the GOP is with the black community. Williams is dismissed as a political huckster in much of black America.

When choosing its black standard-bearers, the GOP seems to be clueless. Remember when the Republican National Committee's Ed Gillespie hooked up with boxing promoter Don King during the 2004 campaign? "What's next for the GOP?" asked one Republican blogger, "A photo-op with O.J.?"

Since at least the '80s, when Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) famously urged Republicans "to invent new black leaders," the GOP has been trying to nurture African-American leaders capable of supplanting the traditional, left-leaning cadre. But the high profile appointments of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice have failed to cause a discernable change in black electoral behavior. And this despite the Democrats' anemic attempts at black outreach.

Their efforts have been hampered by a lack of connection with the cultural currents of the black community. For example, even with Republicans in charge of the government's three branches (and, some would argue, the Fourth Estate, as well), African Americans seemed almost immune to the pro-war propaganda pushing the Iraq invasion. A Gallup Poll released March 28, 2003 revealed that 68 percent of black Americans opposed the war.

Republicans now see the Bush administration's "faith-based initiatives" as a new opportunity to wedge the party into the black community. Because of African Americans' unique history, the church has become the community's dominant institution and the church's religious values have always encouraged a kind of cultural conservatism.

Although those values share much with those of the religious right and conservative Republicans, black voters have shied away from GOP candidates. The primary reason for this disjuncture is the right-wing's racist tradition. Republicans think this sordid history is old news to most black voters and that the time may be ripe to exploit common cultural ties.

Studies and position papers funded by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation predict GOP gains among African Americans if the party uses black churches as centers of faith-based funding for social programs and for private school vouchers.The black media is also a focus of attention because of its unique access to the black community and its prominent focus on religious affairs.

Curiously, the Bradley Foundation also is the financial fount for some of the nation's most popular neo-racist authors. For instance, the foundation funded and still funds Charles Murray (co-author of *The Bell Curve*, a neo-racist sourcebook), Dinesh D'Souza, (author of *The End of Racism* and *Illiberal Education*, two neo-racist screeds) and David Horowitz (a tireless racial provocateur who runs the incendiary think tank, the Center for the Study of Popular Culture).

Despite these ignoble connections, Bradley bucks are funding the arguments for faith-based funding and school vouchers that fuel the GOP's quest for a larger black mindshare.

President Bush won 11 percent of the black vote in the 2004 presidential election, just 2 percent higher than what he received in the 2000 election. But he got 16 percent of the black vote in Ohio and Pennsylvania, where the campaign focused on issues like same-sex marriage and school vouchers.

Bush's success in championing these divisive social issues prompted former RNC chairman Gillespie to predict the GOP would get up to 30 percent of the black vote in 2008. RNC chairman Ken Mehlman seems determined to fulfill his predecessor's prediction. Immediately after taking office in January, he embarked on a road trip of outreach meetings in the black community. In this effort, Mehlman has focused on priming the pump of faith-based institutions and linking the purse strings to the White House.

But many black churches are fighting back. More about that in my next column. ■

Republicans now see the Bush administration's "faith-based initiatives" as a new opportunity to wedge the party into the black community.

SALIM MUWAKKIL *is a senior editor at* In These Times, *a contributing columnist to the* Chicago Tribune *and a Crime and Communities Media Fellow of the Open Society Institute.*

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the OUSTING of OBRADOR

Legal shenanigans plague popular Mexican presidential candidate

BY KARI LYDERSEN

Mexico City mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, otherwise known as AMLO or "el peje" after a lovable swamp fish, appears to be the most popular Mexican politician in recent history.

Although he only officially announced his intention to run for president in early April, for the past few years he has been leading in the polls, currently by about 8 percentage points. Disenchantment with President Vicente Fox and his National Action Party (PAN) is high, and many voters have been won over by Obrador's populist programs, including monthly $60 (600 peso) stipends for the elderly and investment in schools, public transportation and healthcare for the poor.

The last thing the PAN and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled for 71 years before Fox's win, want to see is a victory by Obrador and the moderate left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). In 1988, the PRI essentially stole the presidential election from PRD candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas through tactics that included burned ballots, ballot boxes dumped in rivers and supposed computer malfunctions. This time around, the Mexican establishment is taking a different approach, trying to keep Obrador from ever getting on the ballot.

In 2001, developers of upscale properties in the El Encino neighborhood of Mexico City obtained a court injunction demanding the city government stop building a road skirting their development. They allege that Obrador failed to halt construction immediately; Obrador says he didn't know of the order until later. Once construction stopped, the developers also allege that the city government blocked access to their land by leaving construction equipment at the site, and asked that contempt of court charges be filed against Obrador and his administration.

Both parties have led the campaign to strip Obrador of his official immunity from prosecution (known as the *fuero*) so that he can be prosecuted on contempt-of-court charges stemming from the dispute. With the success of the *desafuero* (as the governmental effort to clear the way for Obrador's prosecution is known), he could face eight years in prison. More significantly for his candidacy, under Mexican law he cannot run for office if facing criminal charges.



Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Mexico City Mayor, and presidential hopeful.

ALFREDO ESTRELLA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

On April 7, only hours after he announced his presidency at a rally of more than 100,000 supporters, Mexico's Congress voted to strip Obrador of his immunity. Anticipating the vote's outcome, Obrador told supporters, "I am proud to be accused, like those who struggled for justice in the past." He also announced that he would turn himself in to authorities, refuse bail and represent himself in court.

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"He's being accused of an extremely technical violation of Mexican law," says journalist David Bacon, author of the book *The Children of NAFTA*. "Under any normal circumstances, this would never even make it to court, but Fox is trying to keep him off the ballot in 2006."

The effort to prosecute Obrador has been going on for some time, and seems to have only increased his popularity with a population fed up by broken promises and corruption from their government.

"He is such a smart guy, everything they [the PAN] do to discredit him backfires," says Jorge Mujica, secretary-general of the PRD in Illinois and a Mexico City native. "Everyone who speaks out against him ends up having to defend themselves."

On August 29, 2004, thousands took to the streets in Mexico City to protest against the *desafuero*. Obrador called for more demonstrations and the public appears ready to defend him. Polls show that 80 percent of Mexico City residents disagree with the *desafuero*. Chiapas rebel leader Subcomandante Marcos called on the Zapatistas to support the protests, even though they don't endorse Obrador's candidacy since they don't participate in electoral politics. In July 2004, students and professors at the National Autonomous University (UNAM) in Mexico City founded a nationwide Network of Youth for AMLO, which now has groups in at least 12 states.

In light of Fox's corruption and alliance with the PRI, youth network leader Alberto Martinez says, "The youth is focusing its vote on Lopez Obrador. The Mexican youth will be who puts him in the presidential seat in 2006."

The other leading presidential contenders appear to be PRI president Roberto Madrazo and PAN Interior Secretary Santiago Creel. Fox isn't allowed to run again, and an earlier move by his wife to run proved unpopular. Neither Madrazo nor Creel match Obrador's popularity.

"If the elections were today, Lopez Obrador would win hands down," says Tom Hansen, director of the Mexico Solidarity Network and a doctoral student in Mexico City.

In an appearance before foreign press in February, Obrador accused Fox and his administration, as well as ex-president Carlos Salinas, of conspiring to prevent his candidacy. Besides the effort to put him in jail, he also blamed them for orchestrating the release of videos showing businessman Carlos Ahumada, now in jail for fraud, making payoffs to two officials from Obrador's administration. During a press conference with Mexican reporters in late March, Obrador professed confidence, saying he would wait and reflect on the situation and urged them to enjoy the Holy Week leading up to the congressional vote.

Many see Obrador's popularity and potential presidency as part of the rise of the left in Latin America. With Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva in Brazil and Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay in office, moves are under way to create a Latin American trade bloc that could counter U.S. economic hegemony and promote large scale social programs for the masses living in poverty.

"What's fueling the rise of the left is neoliberalism," Bacon says. "What the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have been doing over the past two decades has resulted in a falling standard of living, and the political parties which have imposed these policies are seeing a shrinking support base. That's what happened in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela, and that same crisis is evident in Mexico. The ability of the PAN to get someone elected is shrinking every day. No wonder they're going after Obrador."

Obrador is a relative moderate compared to Chávez and Cuban president Fidel Castro, and most analysts don't expect him to make too many waves with the United States.

"Mexico is already locked into NAFTA, and I doubt Lopez Obrador would renegotiate it," says Hansen. "It will be a minor shift globally but not a major shift. Subcomadante Marcos describes Lopez Obrador as the 'left hand of the right wing,' which I think is an apt description. The best we can probably hope for under him is cleaner government and less of a move toward privatization of current government entities like electricity and oil."

"He's a social reformer but not a revolutionary," adds Mujica. "He's done a lot of work nationally to convince the private sector that he would work with them."

One of Obrador's staunchest supporters has been wealthy businessman Carlos Slim, who helped fund the revitalization of Mexico City. The structural and administrative improvements Obrador has made in the city as well as his programs to aid the poor characterize the pragmatic approach that has made him popular.

"When I wander around Mexico City at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning now, the main people you see out are cleaning the streets," says Mujica. "He's transformed the downtown. He's gained a public perception of being a guy who gets things done. Not with PRI style or PAN style. This is an alternative chance to build another Mexico." ■

KARI LYDERSEN *writes for the* Washington Post *out of the Midwest bureau and just published a book,* Out of the Sea and Into the Fire: Latin American-US Immigration in the Global Age.



Crowds gathered in Mexico City in July 2004 in support of Mayor Manuel Lopez Obrador.

JUAN BARRETO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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making CONNECTIONS

Why is the news so bad? What can progressives do to fix it?

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE

In March, conservative uber-strategist Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform launched the Media Freedom Project. This new group is the latest entry in a three-decade-long contest between the progressives who want to protect and extend First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and those on the right who view unfettered expression as a danger to the established corporate order.

The Media Freedom Project's first press release, "The Return of the Re-Regulators," warned that Democratic efforts to reinstate the Fairness Doctrine "could mean the end of popular talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity and G. Gordon Liddy." (See "Fairness Now," p. 12.)

The Media Freedom Project's priorities show why the Fairness Doctrine, which compelled FCC-licensed broadcasters to "afford reasonable opportunity for discussion of conflicting views on matters of public importance," is sorely needed in what commentators like the Media Channel's Danny Schecter are calling a "post-journalism era."

Decades-old journalistic standards of "objectivity"—and even its less-learned cousin, "balance"—are on the ropes. Paid political operatives posing as bloggers are taking down journalists like Dan Rather, while progressive "citizen bloggers" expose faux-reporters like Jeff Gannon. (See "The Blogosphere: Insiders vs. Outsiders," p. 30.) The federal government is filling the airwaves with "video news releases" and hired pundits like Armstrong Williams. (See "The GOP's Quest for Color," p. 13.) Meanwhile, a study by the University of Pennsylvania's National Annenberg Election Survey revealed that young people who regularly watch "The Daily Show" are "more likely to answer questions about politics correctly than those who don't."

With this issue of *In These Times*, we explore the contours of the current media landscape, map the contested territory, and chart the dissimilar conservative and progressive media strategies.

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The Conservative Media Machine

Over the past three decades, conservatives have built and funded an efficient, self-sustaining, top-down system that funnels right-wing messages into the media. By doing so, conservatives have come to dominate the political discourse and have advanced their policy goals. The organizations and individuals named are examples of the most visible participants in the process.

1 BIG MONEY FOR MEDIA

Money from foundations underwrites framers and partisan media. Individual and corporate investments in the public and mainstream media may include ownership, stock, advertising or sponsorship.

2 THE MESSAGE MACHINE

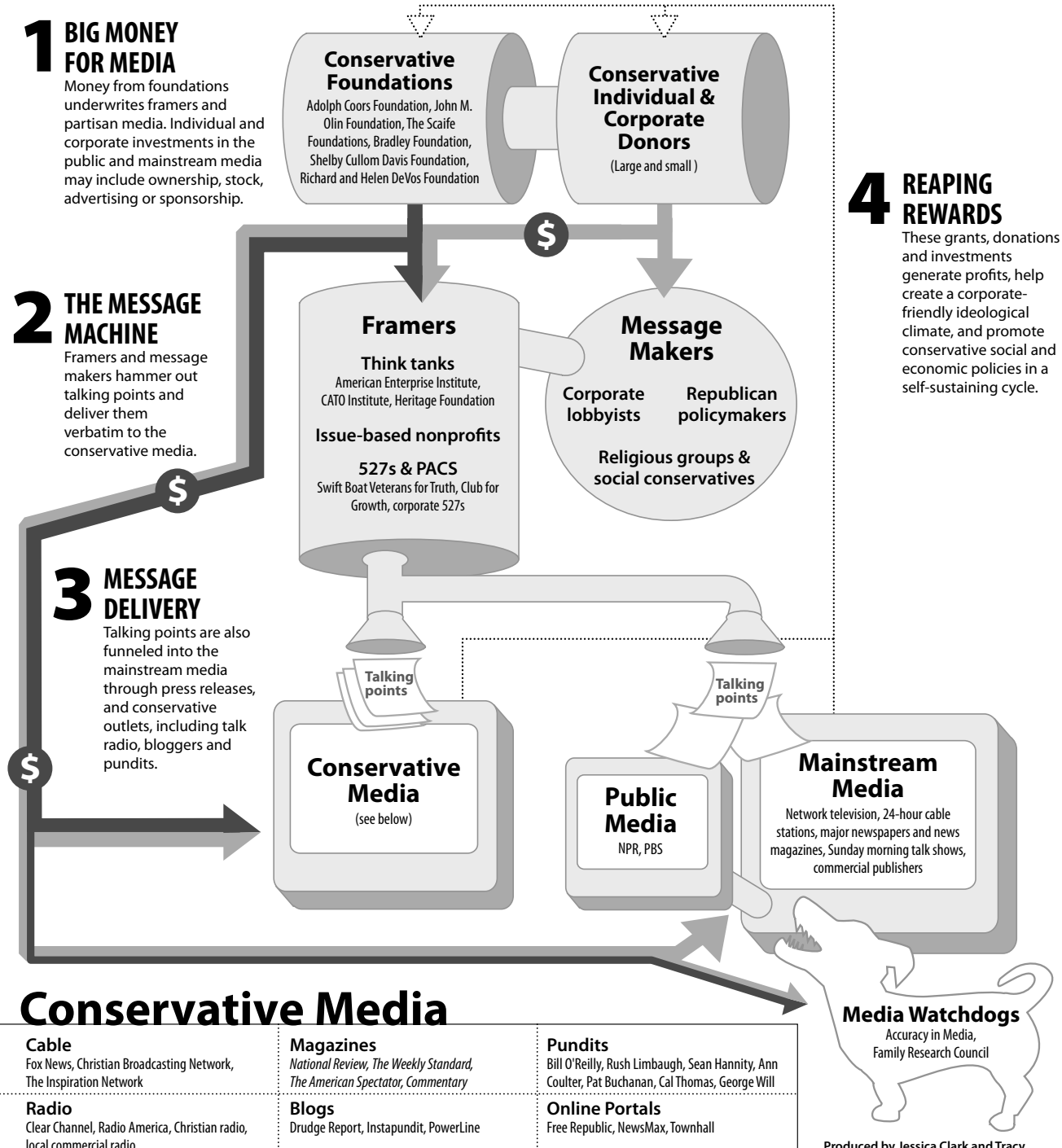
Framers and message makers hammer out talking points and deliver them verbatim to the conservative media.

3 MESSAGE DELIVERY

Talking points are also funneled into the mainstream media through press releases, and conservative outlets, including talk radio, bloggers and pundits.

4 REAPING REWARDS

These grants, donations and investments generate profits, help create a corporate-friendly ideological climate, and promote conservative social and economic policies in a self-sustaining cycle.



Conservative Media

Cable Fox News, Christian Broadcasting Network, The Inspiration Network	**Magazines** *National Review, The Weekly Standard, The American Spectator, Commentary*	**Pundits** Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Ann Coulter, Pat Buchanan, Cal Thomas, George Will
Radio Clear Channel, Radio America, Christian radio, local commercial radio	**Blogs** Drudge Report, Instapundit, PowerLine	**Online Portals** Free Republic, NewsMax, Townhall
Newspapers *Washington Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page, *New York Post*	**Public Intellectuals** David Brooks, Dinesh D'Souza, David Horowitz, Ben Stein, David Frum	**Publishers** Regnery Publishing, Sentinel, Spence Publishing, Crown Forum

Produced by Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke. Lead Researcher: Pallav Vora. Additional research support: Laura Chomyn, Stephen Kovach, Anna Schneider, Jennifer Wedekind. Design by Mikhaela Reid.

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How the conservatives came to dominate

The story of how conservatives have reshaped the media to their own ends has generated plenty of ink. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) founder Jeff Cohen, *Salon*'s Joe Conason and *The Nation*'s Eric Alterman have all written convincingly and at length for both mainstream and progressive outlets about how right-wing media has come to dominate the national debate.

Reformed conservative David Brock explains in *The Republican Noise Machine* that tarring the mainstream media as "liberal" was the first step in the conservative campaign to dominate the airwaves. Founded in 1969 by anti-communist economist Reed Irvine, Accuracy in Media (AIM) was set up to support President Richard Nixon's Vietnam policies by mobilizing opposition to "liberal" bias in the news. "Irvine was practicing a form of jujitsu" writes Brock. "Seeing itself as a public trust, the media was responsive to calls for accountability and was highly susceptible to criticism." Dan Rather was one of the group's targets during that era and has remained so to this day. AIM mocked his patriotic final broadcast as an "extreme makeover."

Inculcating fear of conservative disapproval in the mainstream press—and a consequent alienation of advertisers and viewers—has been the lynchpin of the conservative strategy. It set the stage for the creation of a conservative media machine. In an effort to shift public discourse to the right, conservative foundations, right-wing donors and corporations worked together to create multiple organizations that in turn generated think tanks, issue-based nonprofits and conservative media outlets—all with their own highly paid and well-coached "experts." Then, the right, ever more loudly denouncing the biased "liberal media elite," inserted these newly minted experts into a mainstream media that was now on the defensive and vulnerable to manipulation.

The goals of the conservative media strategy are multiple and overlapping: to protect business interests, elevate a free-market philosophy, advance a frame of "family values," promote U.S. political dominance, and counter popular movements for civil, women's, consumers' and gay rights that were gaining prominence in the late '60s and early '70s. The traditional Republican right found ready allies in leaders of the Christian right like Pat Robertson, who in 1960 founded the Christian Broadcasting Network, which by the late '70s reached millions of viewers and regularly featured prominent conservatives.

During the '70s and '80s, conservative and corporate funders followed an explicit plan to establish and expand right-wing think tanks such as the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Instititue. The think tanks served as incubators for right-wing ideas and by the '90s were poised to capitalize on emerging—and unregulated—media sectors such as cable television, talk radio and Internet commentary. They were complimented by a host of corporate-funded "astroturf" groups created by the public relations industry to counteract genuine grassroots organizations fighting for social, environmental and economic justice.

Like the Bush presidencies, the rise of a conservative media machine has been an elaborate, multi-generational affair. AIM's late-'60s media criticisms were complemented by the critiques of Irving Kristol, the influential co-editor of the conservative journal *The Public Interest*. Irving is the father of William Kristol, who founded the prominent conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard* in 1995 with funding from Fox News owner Rupert Murdoch. Small political magazines like these, despite their low circulation, have been standard-bearers for once-radical ideas that have now moved into the mainstream. After several years of editing *The Weekly Standard*, the younger Kristol used grants from the Bradley Foundation to establish the Project for the New American Century, a nonprofit organization of neoconservative activists who hatched the rationale for President George W. Bush's war in Iraq.

Like the Bush presidencies, the rise of a conservative media machine has been an elaborate, multi-generational affair.

While Murdoch's support for *The Weekly Standard* has been instrumental in the recent history of conservative media, it's his Fox News that represents the pinnacle of right-wing media strategizing—a 24-hour station, available to all cable subscribers that militantly masquerades as a "fair and balanced" member of the mainstream media. According to an analysis by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (http://www.stateofthemedia.org/2005/), in 2004 Fox News anchors and reporters included their own opinions in 73 percent of the stories they reported on Iraq. In contrast, only 2 percent of CNN reporters did so. The report notes, "Those findings seem to challenge Fox's promotional marketing, particularly its slogan, 'We Report. You Decide.'"

The 24-hour news cycle has also spawned its own virulent brand of media manipulation: repetitive, coordinated and incessant. For example, every Wednesday morning, the Media Freedom Project's Norquist convenes an invitation-only meeting of high-level GOP strategists, Congressional and White House staffers, and corporate leaders to formulate the "talking points" for the week. In a January 2004 profile of Norquist in *Mother Jones*, Michael Scherer wrote:

> There is no time for canned political rhetoric. The focus is on winning. Here, strategy is honed. Talking points are refined. Discipline is imposed. … In building his coalition, Norquist has made a conscious strategic decision to go with a big-tent approach. At his weekly meetings, social issues like gay rights and abortion, which can divide the electoral base of conservatives and libertarians, are played down in favor of issues like tax cuts, tort reform, and the rollback of federal regulations and rules. These are the broad-appeal political winners on which Norquist is pinning the movement's future. And they're a strong lure for the corporate community, some of whose members—Philip Morris, Pfizer and Time Warner, for instance—also happen to supply funding for Americans for Tax Reform.

Where does this leave progressives? Stuck, as they are, with defending old-fashioned values, such as truth, fair play, factual accuracy, civility, the open exchange of ideas, the power of reasoned debate, and the honor of upholding the public trust.

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The Emerging Progressive Me

Historically, foundations have not focused on building a progressive media infrastructure. Messages flow from a variety of organi and individuals but fail to coalesce into unified narratives that penetrate the mainstream. Recently, progressives have begun coordinating their messages and talking points, but gaps remain between Beltway politics and grassroots efforts. The groups and individuals highlighted below are among the most visible hubs in the progressive media network.

1 NOT-SO-BIG MONEY FOR MEDIA

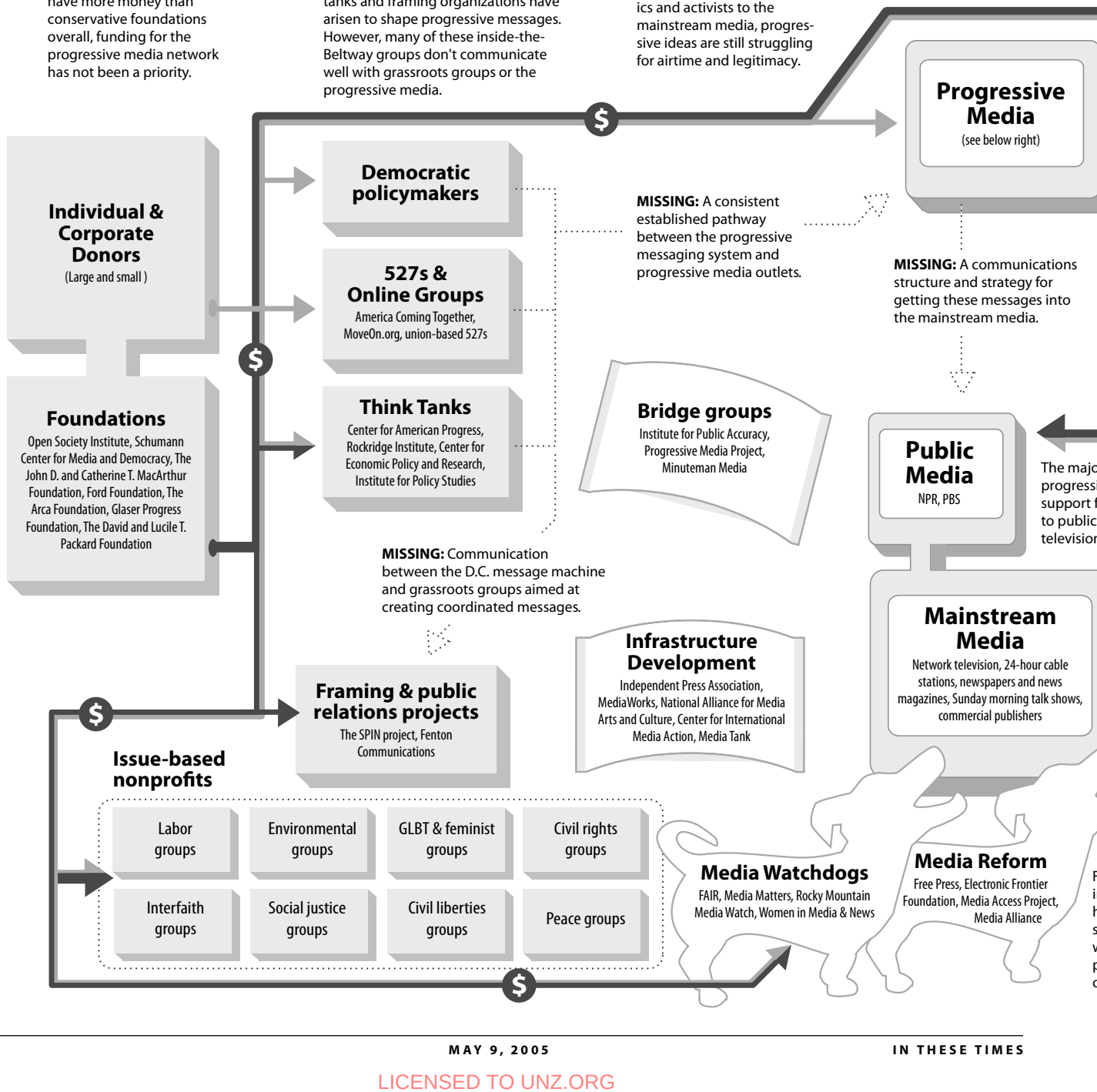
While liberal foundations have more money than conservative foundations overall, funding for the progressive media network has not been a priority.

2 THE EMERGING MESSAGE NETWORK

Over the past few years, both think tanks and framing organizations have arisen to shape progressive messages. However, many of these inside-the-Beltway groups don't communicate well with grassroots groups or the progressive media.

3 MISSING LINKS

Although some "bridge groups" work to connect progressive experts, academics and activists to the mainstream media, progressive ideas are still struggling for airtime and legitimacy.



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supporting media
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policy reform
organizations.

Key Differences

This table points out the structural and political differences between the conservative and progressive media sectors.

PROGRESSIVE MEDIA	CONSERVATIVE MEDIA
Ad hoc	Deliberately organized
Diverse and democractic	Top-down
Social justice agenda	Corporate agenda
Underfunded, difficult-to-sustain media projects	Successful for-profits and fully funded nonprofit media projects
Multiple messages	Coordinated messages
Struggling for coverage and legitimacy	Large-scale mainstream media impact

Progressive Media

Online magazines
AlterNet, TomPaine, Grist,Women's eNews, Pop and Politics

Online portals
Common Dreams, BuzzFlash, OneWorld.net, Institute for Global Communications

Independent community media
Alternative newsweeklies, public access cable TV, Low Power FM, Indy Media Centers

Publishers
Seven Stories Press, The New Press, Nation Books, Soft Skull Press

Magazines
The Nation, The American Prospect, Mother Jones, In These Times, The Progressive, plus many issue-based periodicals, like *ColorLines* & *Bitch*

Public intellectuals
Howard Zinn, Naomi Klein, Cornel West, Barbara Ehrenreich, Tom Frank, Laura Flanders, Norman Solomon, Noam Chomsky, among many others

Radio networks
Air America Radio, Democracy Radio, Pacifica, Free Speech Radio, nonprofit community radio stations

Satellite/cable/digital TV
Free Speech TV, Independent World Television (pending), many independent producers

Documentary producers
Robert Greenwald, Michael Moore, Shola Lynch

Journalists/pundits
Bill Moyers, Al Franken, Arianna Huffington, Michael Eric Dyson, Amy Goodman, Molly Ivins, Eric Alterman, Gloria Steinem, Jim Hightower

Blogs
Daily Kos, Eschaton, Talking Points Memo

Produced by Tracy Van Slyke and Jessica Clark. Lead Researcher: Pallav Vora. Additional research support: Laura Chomyn, Stephen Kovach, Anna Schneider, Jennifer Wedekind. Design by Mikhaela Reid.

Progressives face a predicament

In contrast to conservatives, progressives have done little to internally define "who we are," "what values we stand for" and "what we want." Lacking an agreed upon framework, progressives spread singular messages, resulting in a cacophony rather than an outline of a progressive agenda.

In early December, William Safire quoted James Carville's take on the matter in the *New York Times Magazine*: "They produce a narrative, we produce a litany. … They say, 'I'm going to protect you from the terrorists in Tehran and the homos in Hollywood.' We say, 'We're for clean air, better schools, more health care.' And so there's a Republican narrative, a story, and there's a Democratic litany."

The challenge for progressives is to create narratives that express progressive values. Progressives must develop the strength of speaking with a unified voice, one that communicates our fundamental beliefs while still drawing on the diversity of perspectives integral to progressive principles.

Currently, the progressive media network is missing both a coordinated messaging system and a self-sustaining network that can funnel ideas from the grassroots, progressive think tanks and the independent media into the mainstream media where national conversations take place.

In a 2002 report on progressive think tanks for the Open Society Institute, David Dyssegaard Kallick wrote, "What is lacking is not sharp individuals with creative ideas. … What is missing is an institutional infrastructure that brings these people together with each other and with people who understand practical politics, media and organizing."

For decades, liberal foundations and individual donors have failed to recognize the need for building long-term capacity in progressive media and affiliated organizations, and thereby create a progressive "echo chamber" that can begin to counter the right's media machine. Progressive foundations, with their roots in the reform movements of the early 20th century, have focused on funding social work and single-issue groups.

As a result, the progressive media network has evolved in an ad hoc, organic basis in contrast

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to the conservative media machine's coordinated infrastructure. Progressive media is built by unconnected individuals who have in common the belief that the progressive agenda needs a voice of its own. When liberal foundations do provide media grants, they shy away from overtly political media projects, and instead direct millions toward federally supported public media, such as the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and National Public Radio, or to individual documentary film projects that might be shown on PBS.

In their 2003 report "Funding for Social Change," Nan Rubin and Sharon Maeda write, "Progressive funders do not provide much support for infrastructures, distribution networks and membership organizations that provide the political and technical backbone for 'alternative media' to reach audiences."

They also note in a 2005 update to their survey that while foundations recognize the dangers of corporate media consolidation and the importance of organizing around media, they have little understanding of how to strategically fund media development or how to document its impact. "Few funders see media as an organizing tool or as a way to popularize messages or conduct public education campaigns," Rubin and Maeda write, "Primarily, though, they address the concept of the *message* and not the *media* themselves."

A media network emerges

Recently, new think tanks, such as the Center for American Progress and the Rockridge Institute, have started disseminating progressive messages, providing talking points and conducting fact-finding missions to discredit the misinformation coming from conservative think tanks and pundits. On-line mobilizing groups such as MoveOn and progressive 527s like Americans Coming Together have reenergized a progressive voter base that is politically engaged and active.

Yet these Washington-centric efforts are still not connected to grassroots, single-issue organizations. Too often, they lack the involvement of women, people of color and those who are not upper-middle class.

> The progressive media network has evolved in an ad hoc, organic basis in contrast to the conservative media machine's coordinated infrastructure.

Looking at "The Emerging Progressive Media Network," it's important to note the disconnect between the vast, well-funded "Issue-Based Nonprofits," the "Emerging Message Machine" of the think tanks, politicians and message creators and the struggling "Progressive Media." To participate in the mainstream dialogue, each of these spheres needs to be connected to each other and appropriately funded.

So what are the next steps?

- **Progressive media makers** should reach out to and educate foundations and individual donors about the strategic importance of providing significant funding to independent media outlets in order to build a sustainable progressive infrastructure that can effectively shape public dialogue.
- **Progressive strategists** should develop narrative frames and talking points that can successfully carry their values into the mainstream media. This will require an unprecedented level of cooperation among the disparate collection of independently run and funded organizations that currently make up the progressive movement.
- **Progressive organizers** should continue discussing ways to strengthen their media network without mimicking the top-down, undemocratic methods of the right's media machine. Supporting current infrastructure groups—and building new ones—is key to improving coordination between the different progressive media sectors. This will require financial resources and research.
- **Progressives of all stripes** should look for inspiration from innovative models of participatory information-sharing, such as the collective idea development pioneered in open-source networks, or the community-driven organizing of MoveOn's house parties and Democracy For America's meet-ups. New technological opportunities offered by advances like community Wi Fi also open up fresh media horizons. (See "Is Cheap Broadband Un-American?" p. 29.)

These recommendations are only a start. Like the progressive media network itself, this analysis will continue to evolve. The prospects are exciting, but both financial support and dialogue are needed to reach the next level. ■

In These Times is committed to continuing this conversation. Many people have worked on the two media landscapes presented here and this dialogue will continue at www.inthesetimes.com. We will incorporate your feedback into revised versions of the landscapes that will be posted and distributed in conjunction with the National Conference for Media Reform, which will be held in St. Louis from May 13 – 15.

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five ways to COMBAT CONSERVATIVE MEDIA

BY JAMISON FOSER

1 STOP TALKING ABOUT "BIAS."

Inaccurate, distorted and misleading news reports that further a conservative agenda or undermine progressive ideas dominate our newspapers and airwaves. But this isn't necessarily because reporters or media outlets are biased towards conservatives.

For every Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity, there are dozens of reporters who don't have an ideological axe to grind, but whose work contains conservative misinformation anyway.

Sometimes that's because they lazily repeat Republican talking points. Sometimes it's because the conservative communications apparatus is larger, more lavishly funded and better able to disseminate its message. Regardless of the reason, conservative misinformation appears in news reports written, produced and read by all kinds of journalists.

The Right has spent decades framing the debate over media coverage as one of ideological bias, and it has worked for them. But that's an overly simplistic view of the media. Rather than mimicking conservatives, progressives should recognize that we can't read reporters' hearts and minds—but we can read their articles and columns.

By focusing our criticism on content rather than intent, we can more effectively address the problems in news reports. Criticism based on content rather than claims of "bias" will also resonate with a larger portion of the public.

2 STAY INFORMED

Media Matters for America (MediaMatters.org), Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR.org) and Free Press (Freepress.net) are all valuable resources for progressives who want to fight the flood of conservative misinformation in the media.

Also seek out progressive voices in the media, from Air America to bloggers to the soon-to-launch Progressive Book Club (Progressivebookclub.org).

3 GET ACTIVE

Every day, reporters are bombarded with inaccurate and misleading information promoted by conservatives, and they face constant allegations of "bias" from right-wing organizations and politicians, including the president and vice president of the United States.

Is it any wonder news reports are filled with conservative misinformation?

Well, it won't change—unless we all do something about it. When you see a misleading news report, write a letter or make a phone call. Tell the news organization why they are wrong. Tell your friends, tell your neighbors, tell your family, and encourage progressive leaders to do the same. Progressive efforts to fight back against conservative misinformation in the media will gain credibility and momentum when we *all* join the fight—from local activists to elected officials.

4 BE PATIENT—AND BE PERSISTENT

Conservatives have spent decades actively and intensely "working the refs," as former Republican National Committee chairman Rich Bond famously described the right's criticism of the media. Progressives took longer to get started, so it will not be enough to *occasionally* hold media outlets responsible for purveying conservative misinformation: We have to do it *every day*.

5 FIGHT BACK IN INNOVATIVE WAYS

Aside from writing letters and making phone calls, we must think of new, creative and effective ways to combat conservative misinformation in the media. Come up with your own ideas, try them out—and share them with other activists. ■

JAMISON FOSER *has been Senior Adviser at Media Matters for America since the organization's launch in early 2004.*

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is low-cost wi-fi UN-AMERICAN?

BY TIMOTHY KARR

We have Big Media to thank for saving Americans from themselves. Just as the notion of affordable broadband for all was beginning to take hold in towns and cities across the country, the patriots at Verizon, Qwest, Comcast, Bell South and SBC Communications have created legislation that will stop the creeping socialism of broadband community Internet before it invades our homes.

And to think that Americans might want to support high-speed access at costs below the monopoly rates set by these few Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Today, monthly broadband packages offered by the national carriers hover above $30, barring access to millions of Americans who can't afford the sticker price.

Telecommunications giants have mobilized a well-funded army of coin-operated think tanks, pliant legislators and lazy journalists who stand ready to paint community Internet as an affront to American innovation and free enterprise. Their weapon of choice is industry-crafted legislation that restricts local governments from offering public service Internet access at reasonable rates. Laws are already on the books in a dozen states. This year alone, 10 states are considering similar bills to block public broadband or to strengthen existing restrictions.

Spinning broadband as theirs alone to provide, ISPs have chalked up some early victories—including a draconian law now on the books in Pennsylvania that strips local governments of the right to choose their own homegrown broadband solutions without the prior approval of a monopoly phone company. In late 2004, Verizon dictated the law word-for-word to local legislators, who then quietly slipped it into the middle of a lengthy bill that appeared to call for improved communications infrastructure for all Pennsylvanians. It will have the opposite effect.

Forcing public broadband networks to ask permission from Verizon before offering service is akin to forcing public libraries to ask permission from Borders before checking out books.

Meanwhile, the United States has slid from first to 13th place in national broadband penetration, falling behind South Korea, Japan and Canada, where effective private-public sector initiatives have paved over the digital divide, allowing more citizens to reap the economic benefits of the open information era at a fraction of the costs we take for granted.

Not so in the United States. A nation that once prided itself as the global pacesetter in technological innovation and affordable communications is now the thrall of corporations eager to keep a basic 21st Century right—their right to connectivity—from citizens who can't afford exorbitant access fees. How has America fallen so far back?

> A nation that once prided itself on technological innovation is now the thrall of corporations trying to keep citizens from their right to connectivity.

The struggle for accessible, locally provided broadband has been building for several years. But it didn't hit the corporations' radar until the middle of 2004, when larger cities such as Philadelphia and San Francisco recognized broadband access as a basic public utility—no different from water, gas or electricity—that they could provide.

It's easy to understand the local appeal. Broadband networks have proven a win-win for municipal governments: Community internet creates free-market competition for communications services, improves schools, enhances public safety and social services, and encourages entrepreneurs through public-private partnerships. These networks are relatively cheap to build and bring technology—and resulting economic opportunity—to low-income urban neighborhoods and rural communities that are routinely passed over by the large commercial providers.

For consumers and citizens, low-cost broadband is extremely popular. Across the country, municipal referenda and city council measures in favor of building public broadband pass easily—in some cases offering not only community Internet, but also television and telephone service.

"Access to the Internet today is as much

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a necessity of life as the more traditional services and should be available to all," says Jonathan Baltuch, an economic development consultant from St. Cloud, Florida, a city that voted to provide citizens with a wireless network covering 30 square miles.

According to Baltuch, St. Cloud's municipal network has yielded a considerable return to residents. Prior to the city's broadband network, a St. Cloud resident paid on average $450 a year for commercial Internet access. Today, they pay on average $300 a year in property taxes—money that not only provides broadband access but also supports efforts to keep city streets clean, pick up residential garbage and provide for local police and fire protection. "By the city providing this one service to its residents the average household savings will be 50 percent more than the average tax bill for all city services," Baltuch says. "Further, the $3 to $4 million per year that is leaving the city to flow to corporate headquarters all over the country will stay in the local economy."

Philadelphia decided to follow suit. Last year, Mayor John F. Street announced plans for "Wireless Philadelphia" a project that by next year will provide the city's population of 1.6 million, spread out over 135 square miles, with a full range of Internet services.

It was at this point that the incumbent ISPs began to show their horns. The ISPs are loath to loosen their stranglehold on a market that, according to the Telecommunications Industry Association, could yield $212.5 billion in revenues by 2008.

With so much at stake, it was time to mark out their territory and smother municipal broadband projects wherever they began to take root. The goal was simple—legislate competition out of existence. But to do so the industry needed allies in its fight against local choice. It found them easily among state representatives willing to sell statehouse votes to fill their campaign coffers and Washington-based think tanks—such as the Cato Institute and the New Millennium Research Council (NMRC)—willing to produce "research" that pleased their corporate funders.

To this mix of industry sock puppets add a gullible media. In a finely targeted media campaign, the "evils" of municipal broadband were pressed upon local journalists who were willing to echo corporate concerns without digging for an opposing view.

Too often, newspapers failed to follow the money that linked their sources at the Cato Institute and NMRC to the industry—taking at face value comments and data from these think tanks without revealing the conflicts of interest that would impugn their research.

A report discrediting community Internet issued by NMRC, for example, has been cited nearly a dozen times by journalists in the two months since its release. Not a single reporter bothered to let readers in on the fact that the NMRC receives money from the same corporations whose policy positions it just happens to profess.

On February 17, the battle over access finally graced the front-page of the *New York Times*, with a story pegged to Philadelphia's ambitious plans to turn the city into "one gigantic wireless hot spot."

The first quote by *Times* writer James Dao went to Adam Thierer, identified as "director of telecommunications studies at the libertarian Cato Institute." He told the *Times*, "The last thing I'd want to see is broadband turned into a lazy public utility."

Dao failed to note that the Cato Institute is funded by Verizon, SBC Communications, Time Warner, Comcast and Freedom Communications. Dao then interviewed David L. Cohen, executive vice president of Comcast, who also disparaged community networks.

Again, Dao failed to alert readers to Cohen's web of interests that might impugn his integrity. In a previous incarnation, Cohen served as chief of staff to then Philadelphia Mayor Edward Rendell. Rendell has since moved into the governor's mansion, while Cohen jumped to the private sector. This relationship might explain why last December the governor ignored widespread public opposition and signed into law the bill that shafted Pennsylvania communities seeking to offer homegrown broadband services.

These corporations say that they're shutting down homegrown broadband efforts to safeguard the best interests of American free enterprise. But, as Dianah Neff, Philadelphia's chief technology officer, asked in a recent column for *ZDNet*: "When was the last time they were elected to determine what is best for our communities? If they're really concerned about what is important to all members of the community, why haven't they built this type of network that meets community needs or approached a city to use their assets to build a high-speed, low-cost, ubiquitous network?" ■



Public broadband networks would free people from high corporate charges.

TIMOTHY KARR *is the Campaign Director of Free Press at www.freepress.net. Each week, he investigates the public's stake in the future of all things media via his blog MediaCitizen at www.mediacitizen.org.*

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broadband internet: UNHAPPILY EVER AFTER?

BY JEFF CHESTER AND GARY O. LARSON

Few people blink these days when some Chicken Little somewhere announces that the virtual sky is falling. The Internet has long been subject to such dire pronouncements, and no doubt both Turkey Lurkey and Henny Penny have set up blogs to give new life to old predictions. But when Chicken Big sounds worried (and in the online world, the poultry doesn't get much bigger than Amazon.com), it's time to listen.

Such is the case with the current battle over the regulatory status of broadband Internet, now before the Supreme Court in the form of the *National Cable & Telecommunications Association v. Brand X Internet Services*. Oddly named and replete with narrow legal distinctions—"Brand X" is the Santa Monica-based Internet service provider that was refused access to cable's broadband platform, and the case turns on whether Internet-over-cable is classified as an "information service" or a "telecommunications service"—the *stakes* in the case, at least, are clear. In the words of FCC Commissioner Michael Copps, "This battle is over the future of the Internet."

That future will be bleak indeed if the high court reverses a lower court ruling that classified cable modems as a telecommunications service, and thus subject to the same "open access" regulations that made the dial-up Internet such a diverse and competitive environment.

In their heyday, some 7,000 Internet service providers plied their trade over traditional phone lines. Today, in contrast, many communities are limited to an either/or choice of just two broadband service providers—the monopoly cable company or the local telephone giant. The Brand X case could well determine whether the high-speed Internet of the future will look more like the open online environment of the past, or the closed cable platform of the present.

In his testimony before the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet in July 2003, Paul Misener, Amazon's vice president for global public policy, offered a sobering glimpse of that potential future of closed broadband networks:

> Although perhaps subtle at first, the resulting change to the fundamental character of the Internet would be nothing short of radical and tragic. No longer would Americans be able to obtain for free or purchase all the myriad content they have grown accustomed to receiving at home. The Internet would metamorphose from being the ultimate "pull" medium, in which consumer choice is paramount, to being yet another cable TV-style "push" medium, where gate-keeping service providers decide what content Americans are allowed to obtain. By destroying unimpeded connectivity, the anti-competitive exercise of market power by a handful of broadband service providers would do to the Internet what even a nuclear strike could not.

Misener's remarks may sound a little too melodramatic, but most observers agree that the battle over "open access"—as that term has traditionally been defined (involving our right to choose among innumerable Internet service providers)—pales before the battle of "network neutrality," which involves the control of broadband networks, particularly the vital "last-mile" connections to our homes. For better or worse, those connections are largely controlled by cable companies, which command a two-thirds share of the broadband market. Under existing FCC rules, which classify cable Internet access as an unregulated "information service," cable companies are free to operate their data networks in the same top-down, monopolistic fashion as they manage their video service.

The danger now is that the FCC, in pursuing its decidedly market-driven goals—"the development and deployment of broadband infrastructure is the central communications policy of the day," it claims—will effectively render content diversity as endangered a concept as ISP choice.

So while the *Brand X* case may seem like just another industry tussle, at its heart is something much more profound: the principle of common carriage that has long governed systems of transportation and communications. In other words, the notion that such networks must serve all potential users.

Today, that principle is seen most clearly in the operation of telephone networks, which can neither bar particular callers nor forbid particular messages. It is also the underlying tenet of the dial-up Internet. The explosion of the World Wide Web in the '90s (when a simple URL could take you anywhere, and anyone could launch a site) was rooted in the basic nondiscriminatory, common carrier nature of the Internet. But that expansive era may now end just as the Internet itself, ironically, has entered a new high-speed phase of operation, with dial-up modems giving way to broadband connections.

In the absence of common-carriage protections, as the ACLU explained in its *Brand X* brief to the Supreme Court, "cable companies can leverage ownership of the physical infrastructure into control of citizens' access to and use of the Internet. This threatens free speech and privacy. A cable company that has complete control over its customers' access to the Internet could censor their ability to speak, block their access to disfavored information services, monitor their online activity, and subtly manipulate the information sources they rely on."

And that, needless to say, would be the unhappiest of endings to the story of the Internet, the network once described by the courts as "the most participatory form of mass speech yet developed."

A decision in the Brand X case is expected early this summer. For more information on the case and the issues behind it, visit the Center for Digital Democracy's "Brand X Files" www.democraticmedia.org/news/washingtonwatch/BrandXfiles.html. ■

JEFF CHESTER *is executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy (http://www.democraticmedia.org), a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization committed to preserving the openness and diversity of the Internet in the broadband era.* **GARY O. LARSON** *is a writer/researcher at CDD.*

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Black Listed Cancer Treatment Could Save Your Life

Baltimore, MD— As unbelievable as it seems the key to stopping many cancers has been around for over 30 years. Yet it has been banned. Blocked. And kept out of your medicine cabinet by the very agency designed to protect your health—the FDA.

In 1966, the senior oncologist at a prominent New York hospital rocked the medical world when he developed a serum that **"shrank cancer tumors in 45 minutes!"** 90 minutes later they were gone... Headlines hit every major paper around the world. Scientists and researchers applauded. Time and again this life saving treatment worked miracles, but the FDA ignored the research and hope he brought and shut him down.

You read that right. He was not only shut down—but also forced out of the country where others benefited from his discovery. That was 38 years ago. How many other treatments have they been allowed to hide? Just as in the case of Dr. Burton's miracle serum these too go unmentioned.

Two-Nutrient Cancer Breakthrough...

Decades ago, European research scientist Dr. Johanna Budwig, a six-time Nobel Award nominee, discovered a totally natural formula that not only protects against the development of cancer, but people all over the world who have been diagnosed with incurable cancer and sent home to die have actually benefited from her research—and now lead normal lives.

After 30 years of study, Dr. Budwig discovered that the blood of seriously ill cancer patients was deficient in certain substances and nutrients. Yet, healthy blood always contained these ingredients. It was the lack of these nutrients that allowed cancer cells to grow wild and out of control.

By simply eating a combination of two natural and delicious foods (found on page 134) not only can cancer be prevented—but in case after case it was actually healed! "Symptoms of cancer, liver dysfunction, and diabetes were completely alleviated." Remarkably, what Dr. Budwig discovered was a totally natural way for eradicating cancer.

However, when she went to publish these results so that everyone could benefit—**she was blocked by manufacturers with heavy financial stakes!** For over 10 years now her methods have proved effective—yet she is denied publication—blocked by the giants who don't want you to read her words.

What's more, the world is full of expert minds like Dr. Budwig who have pursued cancer remedies and come up with remarkable natural formulas and diets that work for hundreds and thousands of patients. *How to Fight Cancer & Win* author William Fischer has studied these methods and revealed their secrets for you—so that you or someone you love may be spared the horrors of conventional cancer treatments.

As early as 1947, Virginia Livingston, M.D., isolated a cancer-causing microbe. She noted that every cancer sample analyzed (whether human or other animal) contained it.

This microbe—a bacteria that is actually in each of us from birth to death—multiplies and promotes cancer when the immune system is weakened by disease, stress, or poor nutrition. Worst of all, the microbes secrete a special hormone protector that short-circuits our body's immune system—allowing the microbes to grow undetected for years. No wonder so many patients are riddled with cancer by the time it is detected. But there is hope even for them...

Turn to page 82 of *How to Fight Cancer & Win* for the delicious diet that can help stop the formation of cancer cells and shrink tumors.

They walked away from traditional cancer treatments...and were healed! Throughout the pages of *How to Fight Cancer & Win* you'll meet real people who were diagnosed with cancer—suffered through harsh conventional treatments—turned their backs on so called modern medicine—only to be miraculously healed by natural means! Here is just a sampling of what others have to say about the book.

"We purchased *How to Fight Cancer & Win*, and immediately my husband started following the recommended diet for his just diagnosed colon cancer. He refused the surgery that our doctors advised. Since following the regime recommended in the book he has had no problems at all, cancer-wise. If not cured, we believe the cancer has to be in remission."

—Thelma B.

"I bought *How to Fight Cancer & Win* and this has to be the greatest book I've ever read. I have had astounding results from the easy to understand knowledge found in this book. My whole life has improved drastically and I have done so much for many others. The information goes far beyond the health thinking of today."

—Hugh M.

"I can't find adequate words to describe my appreciation of your work in providing *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. You had to do an enormous amount of research to bring this vast and most important knowledge to your readers.

My doctor found two tumors on my prostate with a high P.S.A. He scheduled a time to surgically remove the prostate, but I canceled the appointment. Instead I went on the diet discussed in the book combined with another supplement. Over the months my P.S.A. has lowered until the last reading was one point two."

—Duncan M.

"In my 55 years as a Country Family Physician, I have never read a more 'down to earth,' practical resume of cancer prevention and treatments, than in this book. It needs to be studied worldwide for the prevention of cancer by all researchers who are looking for a cure."

—Edward S.,M.D.

"As a cancer patient who has been battling lymphatic cancer on and off for almost three years now, I was very pleased to stumble across *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. The book was inspiring, well-written and packed with useful information for any cancer patient looking to maximize his or her chances for recovery."

—Romany S.

"I've been incorporating Dr. Budwig's natural remedy into my diet and have told others about it. Your book is very informative and has information I've never heard about before (and I've read many books on the cancer and nutrition link). Thanks for the wonderful information."

—Molly G.

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too much MEDIA

BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

Our media environment is very noisy, abundant, even polluted. Columbia journalism professor Todd Gitlin calls it "media unlimited." while writer David Shenk calls it "data smog."

We have never had more stuff to hear, see, scan, play, select, view. We've never had more channels, and we're about to get so many more—check your cell phone for updates, and plug in that iPod.

The problem of having too much media is where to start when we think about media reform. Our own efforts to control our selections, combined with the efforts of large corporations to channel our choices, pose new challenges for people who know that democratic action depends on trustworthy communication.

Big media corporations—let's just call them Big Media—like to assure the American public that we have all the information we need, and all the voice we want. And so we don't need any regulations that put limits on Big Media.

And actually, I'm sure it's true that I could find the information I need—if I knew I needed it, and knew where to get it. I'm pretty sure that I can figure out how to make an audio file and upload it, too. But that is not the same thing as having useful communication. For that, I need reliable and consistent information, and I need other people who share that information. That shared information helps people see themselves as members of the public, meet other members of the public and act as the public. Public communication makes democratic process possible.

Outside the high gates of Big Media—where reality shows, sports, "Desperate Housewives" and Budweiser commercials add up to our shared culture—there is all of Little Media. And Little Media—our blogs, our podcasts, our Web sites, our DVDs, our e-mail lists—is an uncharted territory full of confusing and contradictory information.

Unless we have friends, we can't make our way through it, and some of our friends are busy e-mailing us bogus petitions to save NPR. (If your well-intentioned, alarmed, book group buddy emails you a petition urging you to save the NEA, PBS, NPR or "Sesame Street," just send her to www.snopes.com for an urban legend check.)

Big Media makes us cynical and Little Media makes us run for shelter.

This is a moment when public media outlets can make a powerful case for themselves. Public radio, public TV, cable access, public DBS channels, media arts centers, youth media projects, nonprofit Internet news services such as OneWorld, low-power radio and webcasting are all part of a nearly-invisible feature of today's media map: the public media sector. They exist not to make a profit, not to push an ideology, not to serve customers, but to create a public—a group of people who can talk productively with people who don't share their views, and defend the interests of the people who have to live with the consequences of corporate and governmental power.

All of them are little miracles. All of them were created by people who believe that democracy cannot afford purely profit-driven media. All of them suffer financial crises, a hostile policy environment, founder burnout, and the disappointment of producers and audiences who wanted so very much more.

In a "Too Much Media" environment, public media could be our public parks. Big Media filter our choices through branding. They also filter them through manipulation of our access (like our cable provider) and of our content (like our cable TV menu or a browser that redirects us). Little Media funnel our choices through trust networks, some of which really aren't trustworthy, especially for learning about people we don't agree with. Between the two, we are buffeted by profit, partisanship and passions.

Public media can speak to us as members of the public, and introduce us to others. Sometimes they even do.

Look at what happened when thousands of people who watched Stanley Nelson's "The Murder of Emmett Till" on their public television channels joined a postcard campaign that re-opened the murder case after more than half a century. Look at NPR's courageous coverage of the Iraq war, an expensive endeavor that wins no points from this administration. Look at Chicago Access Network's Community Forum, where nonprofits throughout the region can showcase their issues and find volunteers.

The disappointment progressives often voice about public media is earned. "Antiques Roadshow" doesn't make this nation a better democracy. "Car Talk" is not for people who take the bus. Public radio did side with corporate radio against low-power radio advocates. The sector is full of small, embattled actors who often are busiest fighting with each other.

Yet the public media sector is still a very important resource for a noisy and polluted information environment. It's worth investing in our local public media projects, and demanding the best. For instance, many of our public TV stations are not airing programs they could. Ask them if they're carrying "Independent Lens," a highly-diverse social documentary series, at an hour most people could see it. It's worth starting new ones—like the public access cable channel in Philadelphia. It's worth finding out how public-minded projects in a community can work with local public media. We need media services and content dedicated to the challenge of forming—not just informing—a public. ■

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THE FUTURE OF MEDIA

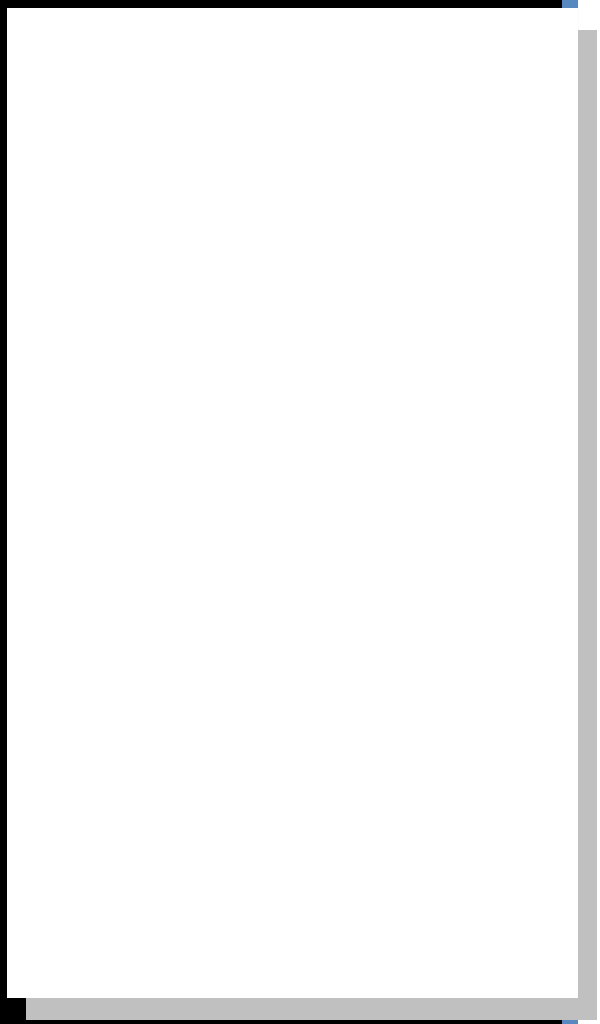
Resistance and Reform in the 21st Century

EDITED BY ROBERT W. McCHESNEY, RUSSELL NEWMAN, AND BEN SCOTT

FOREWORD BY BILL MOYERS

"McChesney's work has been of extraordinary importance. . . . It should be read with care and concern by people who care about freedom and basic rights." —Noam Chomsky

A diverse collection of voices from the growing media reform movement, *The Future of Media* is the essential, comprehensive book about the state of media in the United States and what we can each do to change it. Co-edited by acclaimed media scholar Robert W. McChesney and featuring chapters by Bill Moyers, FCC Commissioner Michael Copps, Rep. Bernie Sanders, and Newspaper Guild president Linda Foley, among many others.



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Robert W. McChesney, Russell Newman, and Ben Scott, eds.
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THE BLOGOSPHERE: insiders vs. outsiders

BY DIGBY

It shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise when *Time* named the right-wing blog PowerLine "Blog of the Year" in December 2004. After all, PowerLine had been widely read by the mainstream media because of its role in a big journalism story—the Dan Rather "Memogate" affair.

In the days after the infamous September 8, 2004 broadcast, PowerLine was among the first to point out the anomalies in the alleged National Guard memos. The notoriety stuck, although a later investigation by the *Columbia Journalism Review* revealed that the PowerLine bloggers—as well as others who gained national media attention, like Buckhead from Free Republic and Charles Johnson of LittleGreenFootballs—were uniformly wrong as to the details, and only right in the larger sense that the memos could not be authenticated.

Nonetheless, from that point on, the right-wing blogosphere became the go-to place for nifty blog stories, leaving the less-celebrated lefty blogs largely ignored by the mainstream media.

What most journalists and others who observe the new phenomenon of political blogging fail to understand is that the "blogosphere" is actually two rather sharply distinct spheres. These roughly mirror the country's political divide and are organized in very different ways.

The right blogosphere operates largely as part of the greater Republican message machine. Many of its bloggers are already part of that infrastructure, working as journalists for conservative publications, writing books and lecturing. Independent bloggers on the right hail from all walks of life, but the leading voices are either part of the political machine itself, like Mike Krempasky of RedState, or closely connected to the conservative media and think tank infrastructure, like Hugh Hewitt, Michelle Malkin and the PowerLine bloggers. The right blogosphere is a reflection of successful top-down Republican message control, and as such these bloggers are welcomed warmly into the fold.

As Garance Franke-Ruta writes in the April issue of *The American Prospect*, the right-wing blogosphere has also recently become useful to long-established political operatives such as Morton Blackwell, mentor to iconic GOP campaign strategists Karl Rove and Lee Atwater. In the recent Eason Jordan affair, the right blogosphere was credited with forcing the former chief news executive of CNN to resign over a controversial off-the-record comment. It turned out that many conservative blogs were part of this larger concerted effort. In the wake of this success, conservatives are now running what Franke-Ruta describes as "Internet Activist Schools, designed to teach conservatives how to engage in guerilla Internet activism," or what some people used to call "dirty tricks."

By contrast, the left blogosphere is populated by "citizen bloggers," who work in non-political occupations for a living and blog for reasons of personal interest. This sphere actually operates as a unique and potentially powerful political constituency rather than a part of the Democratic Party apparatus. Unlike their counterparts on the right, the lefty blogs have had to crash the party, but because they did it with energy, votes and money, they are making themselves a power in their own right.

In the last election cycle the "netroots" exerted their influence through prodigious fundraising, contributing greatly to the Democrats' fundraising efforts. Howard Dean's primary campaign also demonstrated that the Internet was a rich source of small individual donations that collectively added up to many millions. But throughout the campaign, blogs such as Daily Kos and Eschaton were able to raise the six figure sums that normally only fat cats like Bush "Pioneers" could generate. And along with that money came a large group of engaged and informed netroot activists who were able, in the weeks leading up to the election, to marshal a boycott of national advertisers virtually overnight to protest Sinclair Broadcasting's plan to air a blatantly partisan documentary about John Kerry. That action led to a precipitous downgrading of Sinclair stock, enough to cause the company to abandon its plans.

Lefty blogs also spend a lot of time discussing various ways for the party to hone its political message in the hopes that these ideas will percolate up from the blogosphere and gain the attention of the powers that be. They have found that through the amplification of many blogs linking to certain themes and concepts over time, good ideas rise to the attention of those who have the power to put them to work in the mainstream media.

Because of these sucesses, some progressives believed that the recent efforts by Republican members of the Federal Election Commission's (FEC) to regulate blogs as paid political speech may have been motivated by partisanship. As it turns out, the new proposed FEC rule changes, still subject to public comment, continue to exempt blogs from regulation.

With all of the potential for fundraising, "guerilla activism" and massaging, perhaps neither party wants to unduly inhibit their sector of the blogosphere. ■

DIGBY *is a pseudonym used by the blogger who writes "Hullabaloo," online at http://digbysblog.blogspot.com/.*

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union STATIONS

BY DAVID MOBERG

Add up the audience for all of the progressive independent press: national magazines, local newsweeklies, liberal blogs, Pacifica radio stations. It probably isn't more than a few million households.

But add other anti-corporate alternatives—the magazines and newspapers produced by American labor unions—and the audience soars by an estimated eight million households. Yet, the labor press wields little clout, even with union members. Could this sleeping giant, if awakened, play a role in the revival of labor unions and progressive politics?

In the debate over what new directions the union movement might take, the labor press has received little attention. That reflects its sorry state. Labor unions once owned popular radio stations and produced thousands of publications. There were also many independent, often left-wing publications with a significant working-class readership. Some publications still do good work, and there are fledgling labor-backed ventures on local cable and radio, such as the daily shows produced by Worker Independent News. Unions have expanded Internet activity and given growing support to media reform. But compared to a decade ago, there are fewer publications, appearing less frequently, and often of declining quality.

Labor members and union staffers have plenty of ideas about what kind of media labor could create—a national online daily newspaper, a cable channel, a weekly trade journal. Or how it could improve media operations—be more professional, report controversy and debate, give editors more independence. But the first question is simply: Why bother?

Matt Witt, director of the American Labor Education Center and previously communications director at the Mineworkers, the Teamsters and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), conducted focus groups while at SEIU. "The huge majority of people receiving a union publication are not looking at it, in the sense of not looking at it—period," says Witt. However, they do read short leaflets distributed at their work sites, where, Witt argues, people learn through action more than through reading. Other surveys, however, indicate the situation is not so bleak, but creating audience interest is a huge hurdle for any new proposal.

The challenge is not just finding money to mount massive new television programming or publications, says Witt, but also developing skill in delivering a populist message. Labor press advocates like Martin Fishgold, a local union newspaper editor and president of the International Labor Communications Association, argue that labor publications would be more avidly read if they were livelier, filled with professional reporting and controversy, and edited by a staff with independence from union officers' dictates. Labor pursues only a public relations strategy, not a democratic media strategy, he says. Fishgold wants the AFL-CIO to immediately develop national radio and cable TV shows and a weekly publication, and then, within two to five years, create a radio and cable network. He advocates that local labor federations produce mass-circulation newspapers, much like free alternative weeklies.

But with both organizing and politics demanding more money, funding for such ambitious outreach ventures is unlikely. And almost no union leaders support making union editors unaccountable to officers, who legitimately see labor publications as a means to deliver the messages they consider most important. But those union presidents, if they wanted, could decide that a more freewheeling labor press, featuring voices of members as well as the words of elected officials, best delivers a crucial message—that the union belongs to its members.

If a labor press is to exist, its potential audiences include union members, staff and activists, non-union workers, and potential allies and supporters. No one strategy reaches all audiences, or does all jobs well. Leaflets may mobilize workers for campaigns, but they're not as good for providing activists with broader information about the labor movement or developing the intellectual foundations of a new movement, as the right wing has done over decades.

Within likely financial limits, labor could try—while closely measuring effectiveness—several experiments. For example, unions could create some open and democratic local union newspapers, labor-backed alternative weeklies in several cities, more radio programming and internet publications and a weekly "trade journal" for activists and staff, similar to what exists for professionals in fields like computers and education. Sam Pizzigati, former publications director for the National Education Association, envisions a trade weekly supported by unions and by advertising, which would give it some economic basis for editorial independence. But unions could also effectively expand the labor press on the cheap by providing support—including money, paid subscriptions or mailing lists—to progressive, pro-labor publications or by funding independent reporting on labor-related issues.

Ultimately, a revived labor press depends on revitalization of the labor movement itself. But until that happens, labor must explore how to talk more effectively to others and within its own ranks. It may be too much to hope in the foreseeable future for a vital labor press, voraciously consumed by working people. But it is still possible—and necessary—for unions to be influential contributors to a more powerful alternative media. ■

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where are THE WOMEN?

BY EMILY UDELL

What Washington Post editor Zofia Smardz dubbed "Opiniongate" began when columnist and commentator Susan Estrich sent a letter to Los Angeles Times editorial page editor Michael Kinsley criticizing the gender inequity on his Op-Ed pages. Since then, women and men alike have been waxing punditic on the topic in print and online. When the (only female) New York Times Op-Ed columnist Maureen Dowd asserted, "We just need to find and nurture [women Op-Ed columnists]," The Nation's Katha Pollitt responded: "Nurture, my eye. … I have seen men advance professionally on levels of aggression, self-promotion and hostility that would have a woman carted off to the loony bin."

The dearth of women's perspectives in mainstream media is no news to Jennifer Pozner, a widely-published media critic, journalist and public speaker, who is as conversant in the sexist nuances of "Desperate Housewives" as she is in the structural inequities in media management. In order to address the gender bias at all levels of media-making, Pozner founded Women In Media & News (WIMN) in 2002 with direction and input from activists in the feminist, anti-racist, LGBT and media reform communities. The organization was created to take a holistic approach to improving media for women—by combating misrepresentations of women in entertainment and news content, by working toward structural reform and equal representation of women at all levels of media and by giving grassroots organizers the tools they need to challenge media bias.

As part of her work for WIMN, Pozner travels to college campuses across the country, delivering multi-media presentations with evocative names like "Condoleezza Rice Is a Size 6 … and Other Things I Learned from the News." With humorous aplomb, she delivers incisive critiques of the mainstream media. "We don't just get our information from the news, we don't just get our entertainment from pop culture," she says. "We get both from both of those venues and we need to look at both of those venues pretty critically."

"We really need to work with people where they are," says Pozner. "The fact is that millions of people, many of them young girls, tune in to every episode of 'The Bachelor' to find out who will get to go home brokenhearted, and are being told that only the women with the lowest self-esteems, the lowest standards, and the lowest carb diets will be rewarded with love and security. Those people are not [bringing] a lot of critical, political approaches to these images."

Pozner and WIMN are not only concerned with sexist depictions of women in entertainment programming, but the issues being raised in the ongoing Op-Ed debate. A Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) study of the nightly news programming at NBC, ABC and CBS found that only 9 percent of professional and political voices presented on the three major TV networks in 2001 (including during the lead-up to the war in Afghanistan) were women's voices. Pozner interviewed producers from "Face the Nation" and "Meet the Press" to ask them why such a small percentage of guests talking about terrorism and war after 9/11 were women. One producer responded: "Our goal is to deliver the newsmakers, not to get women on the air." Pozner scoffs, "As if 'women' and 'newsmakers' are mutually exclusive!"

To counter that kind of gender bias, Pozner is working to establish POWER (Perspectives of Women Expand Reporting) Sources, a free online database allowing producers and journalists to find articulate female experts from a variety of disciplines, from plumbing to politics to physics. In the lead-up to POWER Sources' projected launch in 2006, Pozner is serving as the database herself, personally guiding reporters on a case-by-case basis to these experts.

Pozner has taken a multi-platform approach with WIMN to address feminists' concerns that changing the number of women in the newsroom is not enough. As



Jennifer Pozner founded Women In Media and News.

Alternet Senior Editor Lakshmi Chaudhry recently wrote, "The best women journalists are those who can write … about the so-called Big Issues without distancing themselves from their gender. Simply changing the demographics of the newsroom won't change the product, especially not in the era of media consolidation."

In other words, as Barbara Ehrenreich noted in a *Los Angeles Times* Op-Ed about Abu Ghraib, "To cite an old, and far from naive, feminist saying: 'If you think equality is the goal, your standards are too low.' It is not enough to be equal to men. … It is not enough to assimilate. We need to create a world worth assimilating into."

Journalist Paula Kamen recently attended a fundraiser for WIMN in Chicago, and said the existence of WIMN gives her peace of mind. "It's unsettling to think of being a feminist without it; that would mean there would be no known organization to act as a watchdog of the gargantuan corporate media and news industries," says Kamen. "And when sexist distortion and belittlement does happen, WIMN is out there—it's like a feminist media 911." ■

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numbers before POLITICS

BY DEAN BAKER

Since last autumn's Republican victory, progressives have engaged in considerable soul searching. The most basic question has been: Why do so many people support conservative policies that hurt them? For an important subset of these policies, the answer is simple: They don't know the numbers.

Public opinion polls consistently show that people hugely overestimate the portion of public spending that goes to programs like welfare or foreign aid. For example, a Kaiser poll from the mid-'90s found that 40 percent of respondents ranked welfare as one of the two largest items in the federal budget, and 40 percent put foreign aid in this category. At the time, the two largest items in the federal budget were Social Security at 22 percent and military spending at 18 percent. The share of the budget going to Aid for Families with Dependent Children, the core welfare program, was less than 1 percent. Adding in food stamps, housing subsidies and other low-income programs could push this figure close to 4 percent. Less than 0.5 percent of the budget went for anything remotely resembling foreign aid.

The extent of this misinformation is important. If a person believes that 25 percent of the budget is already going to welfare, then she is likely to have a very different attitude toward further spending than if she knew the real numbers. She would believe that welfare spending is already imposing a substantial tax burden—one that must have a real effect on the living standards of many middle income families.

Furthermore, any reasonable person who believes that such a large portion of the federal budget is already going to welfare might also wonder how incremental increases in this spending would have any real effect. In other words, if the United States has made so little progress in alleviating poverty after spending so much, why would another $2 billion for child care or $800 million for housing subsidies make a difference? Alternatively, if massive spending has little impact, how much harm could be caused by modest cutbacks, or a "slower rate of growth," as the Bush administration would frame the issue.

Given the fundamental ignorance about the scale of these social programs, it is remarkable that they enjoy as much support as they do.

Such grossly distorted views of the budget are not inevitable. Part of the problem may be attributable to ideology. For example, some people may simply want to believe that welfare programs take up the bulk of the budget regardless of the facts. Part of the confusion is also attributable to right-wing politicians who foster such misconceptions. Ronald Reagan used to talk about the pain felt by hardworking families who had to pay for their groceries while seeing lazy welfare cheats in front of them in the checkout line, buying expensive cuts of meat with food stamps. But the main reason for public ignorance on the size of social program spending is simply how the media reports budget numbers.

For example, when the *New York Times* discussed the political battle over the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) bill last summer, it reported that the current budget provided $16.5 billion dollars for TANF. This number provided almost no information whatsoever. Only a small group of wonks is sufficiently familiar with the budget to recognize the significance of this level of spending. For the vast majority of people, $16 billion is simply a very large number, as would be $160 billion or even $1.6 billion. The problem is made worse when stories present budget numbers that refer to 5- or 10-year totals, often without even making this fact clear.

Reporting on the budget in ways that actually convey information is not rocket science. The most obvious way is to simply express spending and tax items as a share of the total budget. For example, the $16 billion TANF bill can be described as 0.6 percent of federal spending; the $5 billion foreign aid appropriation can be referred to as 0.2 percent of federal spending. This would immediately inform readers and listeners of the context and relative importance of this item in the budget.

Essentially, this is just a question of good journalism. News stories about the budget should provide as much perspective as possible. These topics cannot justifiably be approached in any other way. As Daniel Okrent, the public editor of the *New York Times*, wrote in a recent column,"numbers without context, especially large ones with many zeros trailing behind, are about as intelligible as vowels without consonants."

In short, a simple, and winnable, agenda item for progressives should be to convince media outlets to practice good journalism when they cover national or state budgets. All but the most closed-minded editors and producers should be open to the argument that the goal of budget reporting is to convey information.

Haggling over the way in which budget numbers are reported may seem like a rather indirect approach to increasing public funding for child care or nutrition programs. But sustaining public support for any social spending will always be an uphill struggle as long as the public is so hugely misinformed.

Progressives will have to confront many other important questions on framing and values, but this is a simple question of getting the numbers right. And here the battle lines are not drawn between left and right, but between honest and dishonest. ■

DEAN BAKER *is the co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research(www.cepr.net).*

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Culture

36 Books: Listen to the *Voices from Chernobyl*.
40 Slavoj Žižek examines the Pope's failures.



BY KEVIN Y. KIM

A History Unaccredited

Hip-hop has no standing archives. Like the seminal works of the few who've come before—David Toop's *Rap Attack*, Tricia Rose's *Black Noise*, Nelson George's *Hip Hop America*—Jeff Chang's ambitious *Can't Stop Won't Stop:*

A History of the Hip-Hop Generation is constructed more forcibly than most histories through the recuperation of lost objects: personal archives, liner notes, old music videos, and formal interviews as well as everyday conversations driven by the need to feel the culture, the society behind it, the meanings of its beats.

Approaching hip-hop through its founders, artists, fans and activists—all of whom come across as pivotal co-creators—Chang begins by expanding the definition of the hip-hop generation that Bakari Kitwana offered in his important manifesto, *The Hip-Hop Generation*. Where Kitwana narrowly defined the hip-hop generation as African Americans born between 1965 and 1984—and only rarely looked outward at hip-hop's non-black American elements—Chang's own convictions about race, hybridity and polyculturalism lead him to a more encompassing definition. "When does the Hip-Hop Generation begin?" Chang asks. "After DJ Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa. Whom does it include? Anyone who is down. When does it end? When the next generation tells us it's over."

An almost overly expansive vision imbues *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, the most historically disciplined and chronological of hip-hop scholarship's founding texts.

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Almost. Precise visions like Kitwana's provide explanations rooted in the experiences of hip-hop's core group, avoiding the distortions that come with a deceptively broad palette. Chang's wider vision, however, better captures the constant border-crossing and essence-altering nature of hip-hop and its polycultural participants. "A good portion of Public Enemy was jazz improvisation," group co-founder Bill Stephney chuckles, and Chang exposes the jazzy contingencies running through *all* of hip-hop as deftly as a beatminer on a world-historical mission.

As theoretical as all this sounds, *Can't Stop Won't Stop* captures the polycultural and sober socioeconomic truths we live by without ponderous analysis. Instead, Chang lets female graffiti writers, white hip-hop activists like William "Upski" Wimsatt, and diverse DJs, breakers and pop stars reveal through their words, biographies and works the unpredictable, multidirectional routes culture takes across time and space.

Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation
By Jeff Chang
St. Martin's Press
$27.95, 560 pages

While Chang spotlights race and class, surprisingly, gender issues, particularly the conflicted position of black women in hip-hop well covered in other studies, get less exposure, despite an illuminating exchange between Ice Cube and Angela Davis. Blacks, and to a lesser extent, Latinos, dominate Chang's narrative as they dominated hip-hop, but they come across as dynamic, unfinished, and forever forging onwards and inwards, instead of arriving at the block party or MTV's *TRL* fully formed.

Social, political and economic developments are harder to track in the jump-cutting collage Chang adopts, in true hip-hop style, for his mostly cultural history. Instead, key breaks typically sped over by other chroniclers receive extended treatment, such as the emergence and struggles of Jamaican reggae, '70s-era Bronx gang life and its relation to hip-hop, the spectacular rise and fall of Public Enemy, and the depressingly representative story of how *The Source* went from one of hip-hop's finest magazines to one of its most compromised.

Hip-hop's poorly understood history, Chang brilliantly conveys, is of some of America's cruelest fires, ashes, rebirths and telltale ironies. But in explaining how these tales of destruction and resistance relate—how, for example, converging cultural and socioeconomic factors birthed hip-hop in a "tiny seven-mile circle" in the Bronx—Chang offers all-too-brief explorations fueled by provocative suggestions, reporting and street intuition. He is instead at his best breaking hip-hop down in a language infused with the culture's own rhythms and sounds:

> Each time a b-boy or a b-girl stepped in the cipher, they wrote their own generational narrative. Starting upright in the top rock…feet moving side to side like Ali in a rope-a-dope, dropping down like James Brown…the entire history of the hip-hop body in a virtuoso display of style.

This isn't to deny Chang's connections between, say, chronic underfunding of the inner city and the manifold ways in which, as Tricia Rose put it, "Hip-hop style *is* black urban renewal." But to build it up to a more nuanced, undisputed defness, the cipher falls to future hip-hop historians.

Chang wants it no other way. He has written what is now hip-hop's authoritative master narrative, as idealistic and realistic as it needs to be. "It's but one version, this dub history," he writes in his preface. "There are many more versions to be heard. May they all be." One of the first, strongest members of a school as unaccredited as the culture under study, Chang still welcomes his work's infinite ruptures: new facts, new interpretations, new bass lines of theory and samplings of empirical signs. And in that sense, as in so many others, *Can't Stop Won't Stop is* hip-hop.

Yet there is a subtle, progressive pull to Chang's narrative, a sense that history moves, like hip-hop records, through loops that extend the culture's invitation to anyone listening closely enough: "one world under a groove, beyond race, poverty, sociology and geography." The book ends with a little-noticed march by hip-hop activists at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. Rallied by the boondoggle of a $200 million high school built atop toxic oil wells, 1,000 non-violent protestors—accompanied by a hip-hop band—raised their fists before the Ronald Reagan State Building. Anger and disillusionment with decades of unjust policies, Chang shows us, transmuted into a single, dignified act of defiance.

To the hosts of analysts, pols, activists and hip-hop heads lost amid Bush's America, Chang's final message is clear: Drafting the so-called hip-hop vote into the Democratic Party and holding inflated Hip-Hop Conventions every few years are not enough. For in the end as in its beginnings, hip-hop's deepest promises lie not in top-down institutions, but the restless, everyday movements of a people marching to politics, beats and rhymes that can't stop, won't stop, 'till the future catches up with the collective dreams of our painful, but forever hopeful, past. ■

KEVIN Y. KIM *is a Bay Area-based writer. He writes for the* San Francisco Bay Guardian.

ART SPACE



Jon Langford's 2004 **"We Grow These in Texas"** is just one of 47 works by stamp artists from 11 countries showcased in "Axis of Evil: The Secret History of Sin." The controversial exhibit is on display at Chicago's Glass Curtain Gallery through May 11.

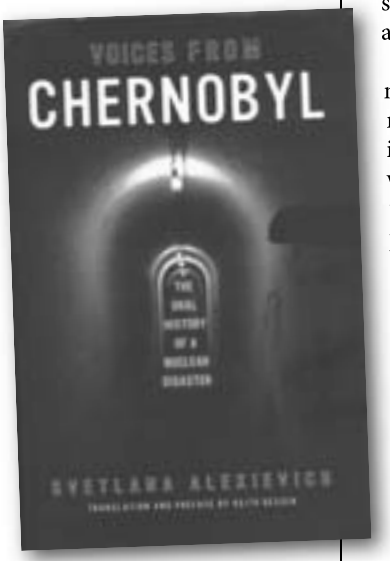
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BY FRED WEIR

No Reason to Exist

The steam explosion that tore the roof from Chernobyl's fourth unit in the pre-dawn hours of April 26, 1986, spewing fallout across much of Europe, seemed a Hollywood techno-disaster flick become chillingly real.

Voices From Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster
By Svetlana Alexievich, translated by Keith Gessen
Dalkey Archive Press
240 pp, $22.95



Though the drama and terror of those spring days have faded, we are still pondering the lessons that, like millions of latent cancers planted by the stricken reactor's radiation plume, have yet to fully manifest themselves. Chernobyl was a global wake-up call on the fragile limits of technology, one that silenced—hopefully for good—both sides' official Cold War enthusiasm for "the peaceful atom."

A good deal has been written about the accident and the massive clean-up effort that followed. The 600,000 "liquidators" dispatched to put out the burning graphite reactor, contain the spread of contaminants, evacuate local populations and bury mountains of radioactive debris—many of whom absorbed dangerously high doses of radiation—remain a vexed political issue in the former USSR. Only this year, Moscow declared it would no longer compensate victims from non-Russian republics, arguing that it should not have to pay "citizens of one country for damages that occurred in another country."

The disaster struck just as Mikhail Gorbachev was beginning his ill-fated *perestroika* campaign to modernize and reform the Soviet system. Gorbachev won short-term political advantage by publicly hammering his bureaucratic enemies who, true to form, had clammed up and for 10 days refused to tell the world what was happening at Chernobyl. But the accident can now be seen as the USSR's death knell. The Soviet model of economic development was exposed as wasteful, hazard-ridden and out-of-control. Millions of people, brought up to believe in the system, irreversibly lost faith as they floundered in that terrifying 10-day information vacuum, wondering whether they and their children were being slowly poisoned by invisible clouds of radiation.

A key social response to Chernobyl was the birth of a vibrant and youthful environmental movement, encouraged by Gorbachev at first to expose the evils of Soviet industrialism and take the bureaucrats to task. While many of those *perestroika*-era gains, such as freedom of the press, have since withered under ferocious attack from the Kremlin, Russia's environmentalists remain a strong and defiant force to this day. That is largely a legacy of Chernobyl.

As Svetlana Alexievich relates in *Voices from Chernobyl*, an oral history of those turbulent few days, it was the USSR's westernmost Slavic republic, Belarus, that bore the brunt of the cataclysm. The tiny country's contamination zone still encompasses 20 percent of its territory, houses 2 million people and produces much of the food consumed by Belarussians. A few decades earlier, the Nazis rolled over Belarus, destroying some 600 villages. Chernobyl emptied out another 500, as their populations fled the invisible death cloud, often permanently. Post-Soviet Belarus has morphed into a paternalistic dictatorship, run like a giant collective farm by President Alexander Lukashenko, and many Belarussians appear to prefer it that way. This, too, can be viewed as a legacy of the tragedy.

Only 31 people were actually killed in the Chernobyl blast and its immediate aftermath, which makes it a pretty minor disaster in terms of human life. But global health officials, who have tracked a huge spike in thyroid cancers, birth defects and other disorders in the most affected areas, warn that the final bill, in the form of leukemia and other serious cancers, won't be in for another decade or two.

Alexievich's focus is the narrowest possible, a series of monologues by an astonishingly wide variety of people who found themselves caught up in the disaster. In the process, a remarkable portrait emerges of Soviet society shattering under tension. Emotionally, it's incredibly raw stuff, but the approach also evokes rich, human detail. Among Alexievich's subjects are peasants, awed by the waves of helicopters and heavy equipment storming across their land, who assumed that war must have broken out "with the Chinese or the Americans." A soldier, ordered into the still-burning reactor area, relates with pride how he and his mates performed tasks that caused robots to break down. The widow of a liquidator tells in harrowing detail how her radiation-poisoned husband's skin disintegrated and his veins popped. A local Communist Party leader recalls worrying that the accident might disrupt the May Day celebration. And then there's the Soviet nuclear physicist who mourns a wave of heart attacks and suicides among his colleagues in the wake of Chernobyl. "When you lose faith, you're no longer a participant," he says. "You're an also-ran, you have no reason to exist." ■

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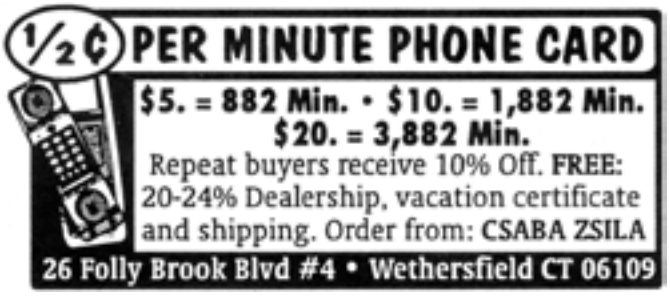
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Pope's Failures

Continued from back page

trauma that forever marks its subject's further development, giving that development a pathological spin. He proposes that, after regressing to this primal traumatic scene and directly confronting it, the subject should, under the guidance of a therapist, "rewrite" that experience in a more "positive," benign and productive narrative. For example, if the traumatic scene that persists in your unconscious, deforming and inhibiting your creative attitude, is that of your father shouting at you, "You are worthless! I hate you! Nothing good will ever come out of you!," one should simply rewrite it into a scenario where a smiling, benevolent father encouragingly tells you, "You're OK! I trust you fully!" To play this game to its end, in Freud's famous case of "Wolfman"—whose primal, traumatic scene was witnessing his parents' *coitus a tergo*—Gray's ostensible solution would be for Wolfman to rewrite the scene, so that what he effectively saw was merely his parents lying in bed, his father reading a newspaper and mother a sentimental novel.

The problem is that such a satirical exaggeration is actually taking place. Today, many ethnic, sexual or racial minorities rewrite their past in a more positive, self-assertive vein, i.e. African Americans who claim that long before European modernity, ancient African empires already had highly developed science and technology. Along the same lines, one can imagine a rewriting of the Ten Commandments: Is some commandment too severe? Let us regress to the scene on Mt. Sinai and rewrite it! "Thou shalt not commit adultery—except if it is emotionally sincere and serves the goal of your profound self-realization." Exemplary here is Donald Spoto's *The Hidden Jesus*. In this New Age "liberal" reading of Christianity, we can read apropos of divorce:

> Jesus clearly denounced divorce and remarriage. … But Jesus did not go further and say that marriages cannot be broken. … Nowhere else in his teaching is there any situation where he renders a person forever chained to the consequences of sin. His entire treatment of people was to liberate, not to legislate. … It is simply self-evident that in fact some marriages do break down, that commitments are abandoned, that promises are violated and love betrayed.

Sympathetic and liberal as these lines are, they involve the fatal confusion between emotional ups-and-downs and an unconditionally symbolic commitment that is supposed to hold precisely when it is no longer supported by direct emotions. "Thou shalt not divorce—except when your marriage 'in fact' breaks down, when it is experienced as a unbearable emotional burden that frustrates your full life." In short, except when the prohibition to divorce would have regained its full meaning (since who would divorce when the marriage is still blossoming?).

This is how (although the modern topic of human rights is ultimately grounded in the Jewish notion of the love for one's neighbor) we tend to establish today a negative link between the Decalogue (the traumatically imposed divine Commandments) and human rights. That is to say, within our post-political, liberal-permissive society, human rights have, ultimately, become the rights to disobey the Ten Commandments. "The right to privacy"—the right to adultery, done in secrecy, where no one has the right to probe. "The right to pursue happiness and private property"—the right to steal and exploit others. "Freedom of





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expression and freedom of the press"—the right to lie. "The right of free citizens to bear weapons"—the right to kill. And ultimately, "freedom of religious belief"—the right to worship false gods.

The greatness of John Paul II was that he personified the disavowal of the liberal, easy way out. Even those who respected the Pope's moral stance usually accompanied their praise with the caveat that he nonetheless remained hopelessly old-fashioned, medieval even, by sticking to dogmas out of touch with the demands of modernity. How could someone today ignore contraception, divorce or abortion? How could the Pope deny the right to abortion even to a nun who got pregnant through rape (as he effectively did in the case of the raped nuns in Bosnia)? Isn't it clear that, even when one is in principle against abortion, one should consent to a compromise in such an extreme case?

One can see why the Dalai Lama is a much more appropriate leader for our postmodern, permissive times. He presents us with a feel-good spiritualism without any specific obligations. Anyone, even the most decadent Hollywood star, can follow him while continuing their money-grabbing, promiscuous lifestyle. In stark contrast, the Pope reminded us that there *is* a price to pay for a proper ethical attitude. It was his very stubborn clinging to "old values," his ignoring the "realistic" demands of our time, even when the arguments against him seemed "obvious" (as in the case of the raped nun), that made him an authentic ethical figure.

That said, however, was John Paul really up to the level of this task? Consider that the Catholic Church has its own "white mafia," Opus Dei, a (half) secret organization that somehow embodies the pure Law beyond any positive legality. Opus Dei's supreme rule is an unconditional obedience to the Pope and the ruthless determination to work for the Church, with all other rules being (potentially) suspended. As a rule, its members, whose task is to penetrate the top political and financial circles, keep secret or play down their Opus Dei identity. As such, they are effectively "opus dei"—the "work of God," i.e., perversely imagining themselves as the direct instrument of divine will.

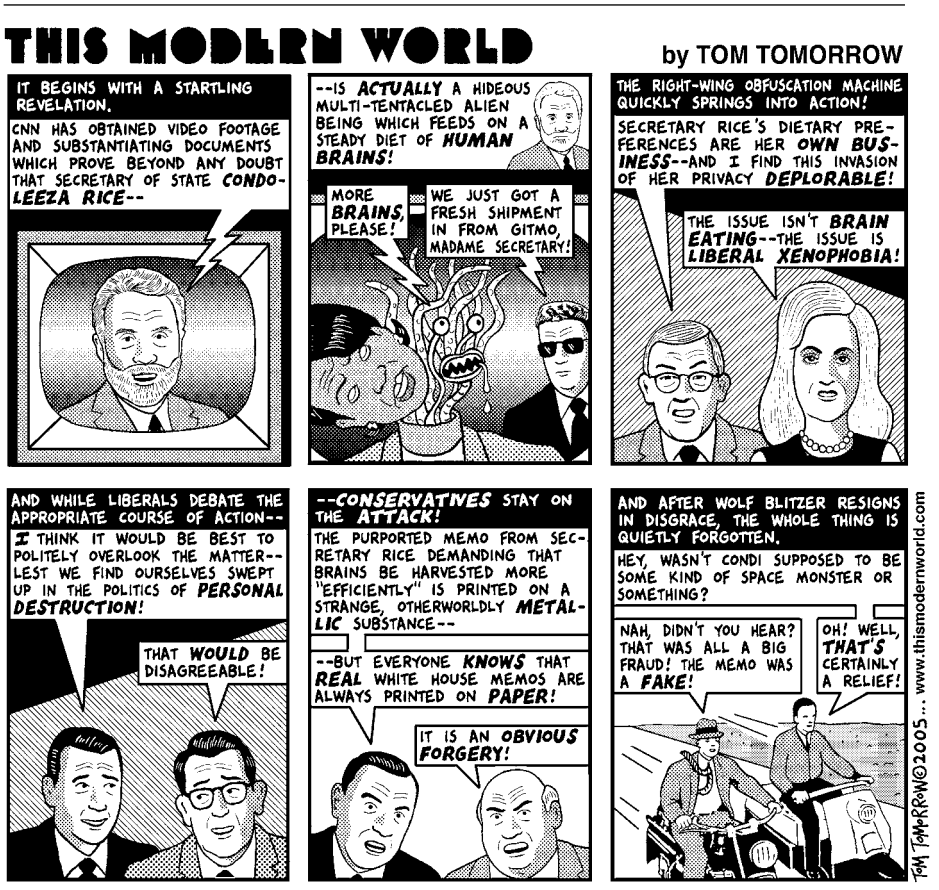
Let us also consider the abundant cases of sexual molestation of children by priests. These cases are so widespread, from Austria and Italy to Ireland and the United States, that one can effectively speak of an articulated "counterculture" within the Church that has its own set of hidden rules. And there is a connection between the pederast scandals and Opus Dei because the group works with the Church to intervene and hush them up.

The Church's reaction to the sex scandals demonstrates the way it perceives its role: It insists that these cases, deplorable as they are, are the Church's internal problem, and it displays great reluctance to collaborate with police in their investigations. Indeed, in a way, the Church is right. The molestation of children *is* the Church's internal problem—that is to say, an inherent product of its institutional organization and of the libidinal economy on which that organization relies. Obviously, these scandals are not simply particular criminal cases concerning particular individuals who just happen to be priests. The problem is systemic.

Consequently, the answer to the Church's reluctance should not only be that these are criminal cases and, if the Church does not fully cooperate in the investigations, it should be seen as an accomplice after the fact. Over and beyond this, the Church, *as such*, as an institution, should be investigated in regard to the way it systematically produces such crimes.

This is also the reason why one cannot explain away the priests' sexual scandals as the opponents of celibacy suggest—that they occur because the priests' sexual urges do not find a legitimate outlet and thus explode in a pathological way. Allowing Catholic priests to get married would not solve the problem. We would not get priests doing their jobs without harassing young boys because it is the priesthood itself that generates pedophilia through its sexual apartheid (male exclusivity).

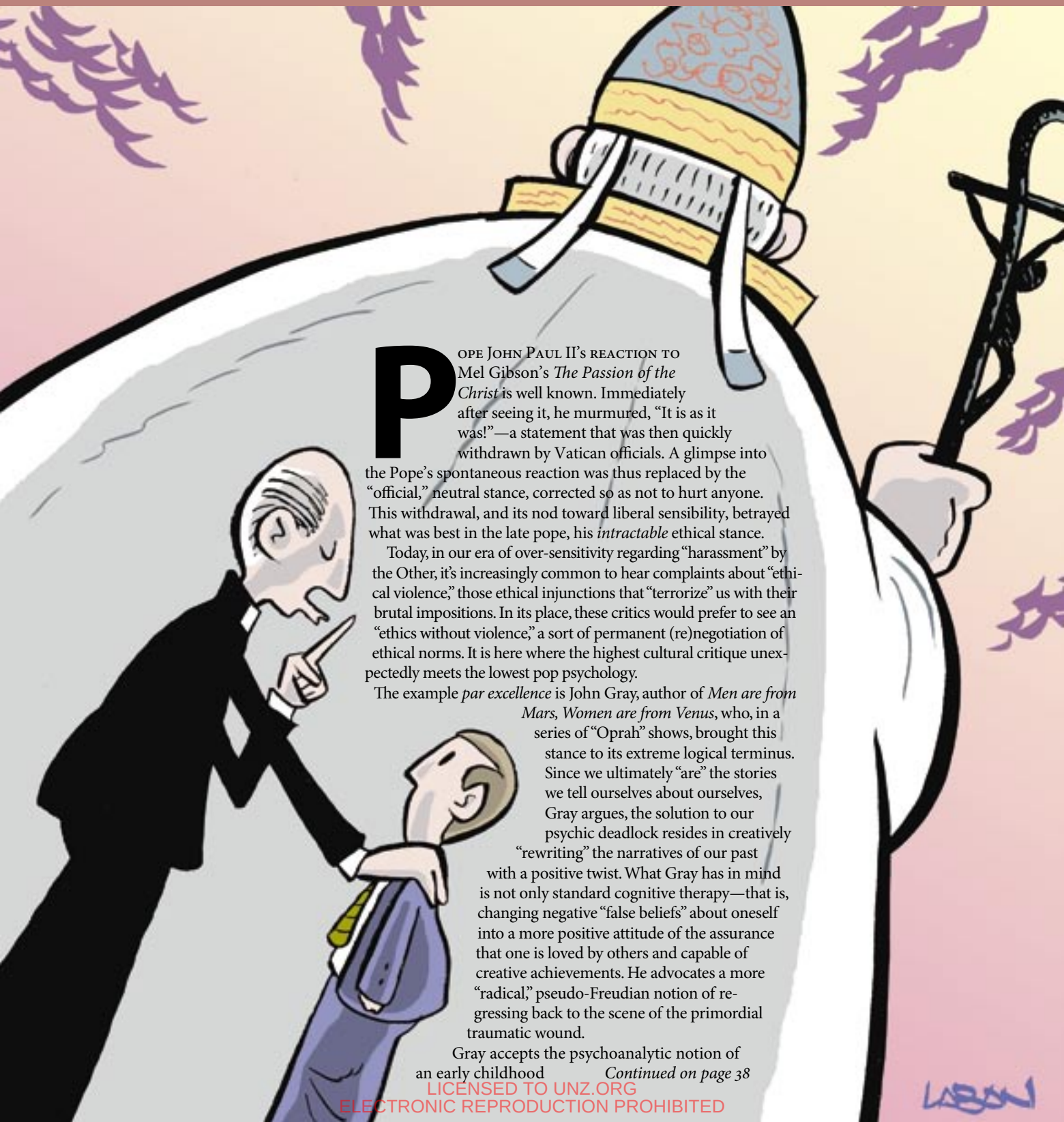
And it is here that the Pope failed. In spite of his public pronouncements of worry, he failed to confront the roots and consequences of the pedophilic scandals. Under his reign, Opus Dei got stronger than ever. The pope's spokesman, Navarro Valls, is a member. He even elevated the group's founder, Jose Maria Escriva de Balaguer (an open anti-Semite and proto-Fascist), into sainthood—an act that blatantly contradicts and thus cancels his apology to Jews for the centuries of Christianity's crimes committed against them. This is why John Paul II was an ethical failure—proof that even a sincere, radical ethical stance can become a fake, empty pose if it does not take into account its own conditions and consequences. ■



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The Pope's Failures

By Slavoj Žižek



Pope John Paul II's reaction to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is well known. Immediately after seeing it, he murmured, "It is as it was!"—a statement that was then quickly withdrawn by Vatican officials. A glimpse into the Pope's spontaneous reaction was thus replaced by the "official," neutral stance, corrected so as not to hurt anyone. This withdrawal, and its nod toward liberal sensibility, betrayed what was best in the late pope, his *intractable* ethical stance.

Today, in our era of over-sensitivity regarding "harassment" by the Other, it's increasingly common to hear complaints about "ethical violence," those ethical injunctions that "terrorize" us with their brutal impositions. In its place, these critics would prefer to see an "ethics without violence," a sort of permanent (re)negotiation of ethical norms. It is here where the highest cultural critique unexpectedly meets the lowest pop psychology.

The example *par excellence* is John Gray, author of *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, who, in a series of "Oprah" shows, brought this stance to its extreme logical terminus. Since we ultimately "are" the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, Gray argues, the solution to our psychic deadlock resides in creatively "rewriting" the narratives of our past with a positive twist. What Gray has in mind is not only standard cognitive therapy—that is, changing negative "false beliefs" about oneself into a more positive attitude of the assurance that one is loved by others and capable of creative achievements. He advocates a more "radical," pseudo-Freudian notion of regressing back to the scene of the primordial traumatic wound.

Gray accepts the psychoanalytic notion of an early childhood

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